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ABSTRACT

An Australian study explored assumptions underlying thinking about work experience and vocational placement programs described in the literature, documented how much they were warranted by available evidence, and examined student and employer benefits. Surveys collected data from the following: students in grades 10-12 who participated in placements in 1996; work experience and vocational placement coordinators in schools; coordinators of vocational placements; and workplace supervisors. Findings indicated that students were involved in selecting placements and making arrangements. Major responsibility for negotiating placements rested with teachers and coordinators; employers played a minimal role. Few students said they were given a list of things to do before entering the workplace; the majority of coordinators and teachers claimed students were sent into workplaces with such a list. The great majority of students received some training to prepare them for their workplace experience. About half of teachers and coordinators reported no training for their roles. Few students chose traditional trades or emerging industries as desirable vocational placement. Most students' performance was assessed, frequently by workplace supervisors. When students rated the extent to which their expectations were fulfilled, findings showed significant and high positive correlations between expectations and outcomes. The majority of all respondents believed the workplace experience was worthwhile and had definite benefits. (Contains 12 references. Appendixes include survey instruments and results.) (YLB)

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SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WORKPLACES:

What are the benefits?

JOSIE MISKO

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School students in workplaces:

What are the benefits?

JOSIE MISKO

February 1998

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Summary

Providing students with practical experience in the workplace has increasingly become a major responsibility for secondary schools. To date, this experience has taken the form of general work experience which helps students to become familiar with the world of work, and more structured work placements in which students are expected to develop industry-specific skills as part of an accredited course. The extent to which these placements deliver these outcomes for students is the subject of this study.

Aims of the study

The principal aims of the project were to explore the assumptions which underlie the thinking about work experience and vocational placements as described in the literature and to document the extent to which these assumptions are warranted by the available evidence. Secondary aims were to examine the benefits derived by students and employers from work experience/vocational placement programs and to draw out some major implications for policy.

Collection of data

This study was conducted in a sample of government and non-government schools in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia and Catholic schools in Tasmania and Victoria. Data were collected by means of four separate questionnaire surveys. These included surveys of students in Years 10, 11 and 12 who had participated in work experience and vocational placements; teachers in these schools responsible for the co-ordination of these programs; and ASTF vocational placement co-ordinators and employers who had provided work experience and vocational placements for schools involved in the study.

A total of 2285 students (58.1% female, 41.8% male), 41 teachers responsible for co-ordinating work experience and or vocational placement programs in the study schools, 170 vocational placement co-ordinators, and 292 workplace supervisors provided information for the study.

More than half (52.3%) of the students were in Year 10. Students in Year 11 formed the next largest group (40.2%). Apart from four students who were identified as Year 13 students, the remainder were in Year 12. The great majority (89.8%) of students had participated in work experience programs with about a tenth (10.2%) of the group participating in vocational placement programs.

Major findings

Organisation of placements

The findings of this study show that although students are generally involved in selecting placements and making final arrangements for their work experience/vocational placements, the major responsibility for negotiating placements rests with teachers and co-ordinators. This is especially the case for vocational placements. The findings also show that apart from prescribing some criteria for schools to follow in the selection of students, employers play a minimal role in organising the placements. There were only a few cases where employers interviewed students for the purpose of selecting them for placements.

Time allocation

Students spent a median number of five days in the workplace. Although very many ways for students to organise placements were reported, vocational placement students were significantly more likely to spend a day per week throughout a term than were work experience students. The most frequently used mode of organisation for both work experience and vocational placements was the one week block.

Most students believed that the particular mode they had followed was appropriate. There were few students who believed that the program had either been too short or too long. Although schools made attempts to minimise the disruption to students' regular classes, there are still substantial numbers of students, teachers and co-ordinators reporting that time for work experience/vocational placements is not integrated into the regular timetable. This means that students have to catch up on work missed in their own time.

Preparing for placements

Students

Only a small percentage of students claimed to have been given a list of things to do before they entered the workplace. A different picture emerges from co-ordinators and teachers, the majority of whom claim that students in their programs were sent into workplaces with a list of things to do. In addition, co-ordinators reported advising students to contact supervisors, discuss expected outcomes/course requirements and complete vocational placement forms in preparation for their placements.

Teachers

The majority of teachers reported receiving assistance from other school staff in performing their duties. However, teachers co-ordinating vocational placements were more likely to have had training for this role than those co-ordinating work experience. They were also more likely to have received training and assistance from industry bodies.

Supervisors

Co-ordinators reported that supervisors were given assistance to help them prepare for receiving students in the workplace. This assistance tended to be in the form of printed materials to be used for assessing students and helping with assessment practices. In addition, supervisors were provided with printed materials explaining the purposes of the program and in-person explanations of program requirements, assessment procedures and completion of logbooks.

Co-ordinators

Apart from receiving funds and assistance from other school staff, co-ordinators in this study reported receiving little other assistance in preparing them for organising and monitoring placements.

Training for work experience/ vocational placements

Students

The great majority of students had received some training to prepare them for their time in the workplace. The most common form of training received by work experience students was in occupational health and safety, employer expectations and working conditions. For vocational placement students it was in communication, employer expectations and occupational health and safety. Training in sexual harassment and legal issues was less widespread. There were also very few students who received any training in industry-specific skills before going into the workplace. Communication skills was identified as the most useful area of training. This was followed by employer expectations and occupational health and safety.

According to the majority of teachers, students were provided with training in the expectations of the program, communication skills and occupational health and safety.

According to co-ordinators, vocational placement students were given training in industry-specific knowledge for the completion of modules, occupational health and safety, industry-specific skills and appropriate behaviour for the workplace.

Teachers

Well under half of the teachers co-ordinating work experience and over half of those co-ordinating vocational placements reported having received no training for undertaking these roles. For the few who had received training for their role in co-ordinating work experience the training had, for the most part, been in how to market the program and obtain placements. This was followed by instructions in how to liaise with employers and monitor the quality of the program. Teachers co-ordinating vocational placements received similar training. However, they were more likely to say that they had been given training in how to monitor the quality of the program than were teachers co-ordinating work experience.

Co-ordinators

Almost half of the co-ordinators in this study claimed they had received no training for their jobs. The remainder indicated receiving training in how to liaise with employers, obtain vocational placements and market the program. Few had been taught how to monitor the quality of the program.

Supervisors

Only a small group of supervisors had received accredited assessor or supervisor training or other management skills training. Supervisors were generally of the opinion that those responsible for training students were already adequately prepared to take on this role. Teachers reported that supervisors of vocational placement students were far more likely to receive training than supervisors of work experience students.

Requests for further training or assistance

Students

Few students requested any additional training. The most frequent request was for practical experience and industry-specific skills and knowledge before going into more training in the workplace.

Co-ordinators

For co-ordinators, the most frequent requests were for additional funding and additional staff to help them improve the effectiveness of their programs.

Supervisors

Very few supervisors made requests for additional training. What they did want, however, was information on insurance cover, student details and a list of specific objectives to be achieved by students. Supervisors of vocational placement students were also more likely to request a list of specific skills to be taught to students than supervisors of work experience only students. They were also more likely to request additional funding than were supervisors of work experience only students.

Occupations chosen by students

Few students chose the traditional trades or emerging industries as desirable occupations for their work experience/vocational placements. The most frequent occupations were in the health and community services sector, followed by occupations in the education and childcare sectors. Although occupations in the hospitality sector represented the third largest select group, they still accounted for seven per cent of the total number of students. Altogether the trades, including hospitality, accounted for about 14.1 per cent of the total number of students providing information on their occupational interests.

Responsibility for training

Students reported that they learnt skills from other workers more than from any other single group of individuals in the workplace. Supervisors were the next major group to be identified in this regard.

Co-ordinators did not provide any information on this question. However, their reports on how they expected supervisors to assist in skill development reveal they believed supervisors should take the major role in supervising and training students. They also expected them to provide appropriate skills and allocate adequate time for training. They believed that supervisors should demonstrate the correct procedures for performing tasks and also correct any faulty techniques students might display. Supervisors also needed to provide students with access to real-world practical tasks.

Supervisors tended to allocate the major responsibility for training to themselves and then to managers and leading hands, senior tradespeople, or professionals working with students.

Recording student performance

Supervisor reports, student logbooks and supervisor-completed checklists were all employed to record and report on student workplace performance. Work experience students indicated that the most common form of recording and reporting on their experience was the supervisor report. For vocational placement students it was the logbook.

Students

Substantial numbers of work experience students also indicated that logbooks were used to record and report on their performance.

Co-ordinators and teachers

Co-ordinators and teachers confirmed that logbooks were the most frequent form of recording student performance in vocational placements. However, co-ordinators also believed that student journals, supervisor checklists and reports were frequently used. For work experience students, the recording methods identified by students were confirmed by teachers.

Supervisors

The use of checklists, logbooks and journals were also reported by supervisors. Almost a third of the supervisors in this study reported that no records of performance were kept (about 10 per cent of these claimed that there was no need to do so). However, the majority of supervisors believed that the type of records currently being used were effective.

A substantial number of supervisors provided suggestions for the modification of logbooks, checklists and plans of activities for better record-keeping. They also highlighted the need for schools to play a greater part in the whole process and to clarify the objectives of the placements for organisations and for students alike.

Assessing student performance

The great majority of students had been given an assessment of their performance. Assessments were frequently conducted by supervisors at the workplaces. However, a greater proportion of vocational placement students than work experience students claimed that they were also assessed by senior workers, managers and teachers.

Teachers and co-ordinators also reported that the most frequent assessor of student performance was the workplace supervisor, followed by teachers from school.

Follow-up activities

Work experience students and teachers co-ordinating work experience both confirmed the written report as a major follow-up activity. This was followed by class discussion and student presentations. Vocational placement students, teachers co-ordinating vocational placements and co-ordinators all reported the major forms of follow-up activities for vocational placements as being class discussion, followed by a written report and student presentations.

Program evaluation

About three quarters of the co-ordinators in this study claimed they had processes in place for program evaluation. These evaluations were based on results of discussions with, and surveys of, students, employers, teachers and parents. A number of co-ordinators also used results of destination studies and the review of student logbooks and reports as indicators of the effectiveness of the program.

Expectations and outcomes

Student expectations

Students wanted their time in the workplace to fulfill a variety of expectations. They needed to be able to understand the work environment, find out if the chosen occupation was what they really wanted and the types of skills that it would require. They wanted to experience what it was like to work with others and to have a sense of responsibility. They also expected to become better informed about the different career choices available, to understand better their own career potential and to increase confidence in their ability. To a lesser extent, they also wanted the experience to help them decide which courses to do at university or TAFE, which subjects to do next year and what type of apprenticeship/traineeship to undertake in the future.

Outcomes

When students were asked to rate the extent to which their expectations were fulfilled, the findings show significant and high positive correlations (ranging from r=.49 to r=.70) between expectations and outcomes. This means that high expectations were more likely to be associated with high outcomes and low expectations with low outcomes.

Co-ordinators and teachers

Co-ordinators and teachers also believed that the placements should result in similar outcomes for students.

Offers from employers

Although students reported a variety of employer offers, the most frequent was for extra work experience. However, almost a third of work experience students and over a third of vocational placement students reported that they had been offered part-time employment. Fewer students reported having received offers of full-time employment. Apprenticeships and traineeships were less frequently offered by employers.

Co-ordinators also reported that part-time employment was more frequently offered to students in their programs than any other forms of employment.

Supervisors also reported providing students with far more offers of part-time than full-time employment.

Satisfaction with work experience

The great majority of work experience students and vocational placement students, co-ordinators and supervisors believed that experience in the workplace was worthwhile and had definite benefits. A substantial number of students believed that the experience had been enjoyable, had provided them with valuable experience of the world of work and had helped prepare them for future employment and life in general. There were few students who believed that they had learnt nothing new or not very much from their placement. In addition, the great majority of students wanted to repeat the experience.

Employers reported that other workers were generally willing to work with students and that they, themselves, for the most part, looked forward to having students in the workplace. They did highlight the extra work created by being involved in providing placements. However, they also highlighted the benefits provided by being involved in such programs. These related to promoting the company image, fulfilling a sense of community responsibility and using placements to make recruitment decisions.

Supervisor expectations

Supervisors provided information on the personal attributes and academic, technical and interpersonal skills considered essential for students to demonstrate in the workplace. This information showed that supervisors believe that personal attributes (e.g. courtesy, willingness and ability to learn, co-operation, punctuality, responsiveness, self-discipline, initiative, attention to detail and safety awareness) were by far the most favoured of these essential skills. Reading skills were the only specific skills to be identified as essential by more than four in ten supervisors. Maths skills, computer skills, academic knowledge, clerical skills (filing) and ability to speak a second language figured very low among supervisor expectations. Supervisors were also asked to rate the extent to which students in work experience/vocational placements almost always, sometimes or almost never demonstrated these skills or attributes. Students were perceived to *almost always* be likely to demonstrate punctuality and courtesy by over three-quarters of those supervisors who also considered these to be essential. The next most frequently demonstrated student attributes were co-operation, reading skills and willingness to learn. No other skill or attribute was perceived to be demonstrated by students to any great extent.

Suggestions for improvement

Over half of the students did not believe that the programs needed to be improved. The remainder suggested that programs could be improved by providing more meaningful tasks to perform in the workplace. This was more relevant for work experience students than vocational placement students.

Teachers co-ordinating work experience students also suggested that students be given more meaningful things to do at work. They believed that co-ordination between school and the workplace could be improved. Those co-ordinating vocational placements also believed that programs could be improved by better co-ordination between school and workplace and better preparation of workplace supervisors.

Conclusions and implications

This study gives further evidence of the benefits students and employers derive from being involved in work experience/vocational placement programs, and provides strong support for the continuation and extension of these programs. The findings also support the need for resources to be allocated to implement strategies to:

- raise the image of the trades and emerging and growth industries in the eyes of parents and students
- ensure that workplace supervisors are provided with necessary information that will assist them to provide effective training and assessment
- create mechanisms to assist co-ordinators of work experience or vocational placements to find willing and appropriate workplaces
- create consultative mechanisms between schools and industry to make decisions about assessment arrangements
- encourage schools to recognise the goodwill of employers and workers involved in providing training, and to prepare students to do their best in the workplace
- create consultative mechanisms between schools and industry to identify meaningful things for students to do at work
- encourage schools to integrate time for work experience/vocational placements into regular timetables

School students in workplaces: What are the benefits?

Background

The 1980s witnessed increasing trade imbalances between Australia and its trading partners. This required a strategy aimed at improving international competition by altering the mix of trade from a heavy reliance on primary exports to an emphasis on value-added goods and services (e.g. education, pharmaceuticals, defence technology and communications). These developments created a need for restructuring Australian industry and the growth of a more skilled and adaptable workforce. The restructuring of Australian industries has caused the gradual disappearance of many low-skilled jobs and decreasing opportunities for the employment of those lacking experience or adequate training. In addition, the effect of regular economic downturns has also resulted in high rates of unemployment which has especially been exacerbated in the case of school leavers and young adults.

Against this backdrop, there has been a major federal government push for education and training systems to play an increased role in making sure that young people are prepared for entry into the workforce. Under the auspices of the former government's national training agenda, the Australian National Training Authority was established in 1992 to co-ordinate and oversee the growth and development of VET in Australia. The Australian Vocational and Training System (AVTS) represented the first attempt at developing a 'new integrated entry-level training system' (Sweet 1993, p. 15). Today, the 'New Apprenticeships' system has adopted similar goals. New Apprenticeships is an industry-led system aimed at delivering the skills required by industry to industry. It is based on an open-training market where employers have much more choice in the ways that training is delivered and accessed. The new strategy supports a nationally consistent approach to training and a national framework for the recognition of skills and qualifications, the removal of barriers to training and the establishment of co-operative links between training providers and industry.

Schools have responded to the challenge of preparing students for the world of work by increasing their focus on work-based learning in their curricula. This means that students are increasingly being encouraged to complete entry-level training while they are still at school.

In addition, they are able to complete this training either at school, at TAFE or in the workplace. Workplace learning for school students is mainly based on traditional work experience programs. Students are sent into workplaces to sample jobs or generally increase their knowledge of industries and occupations. In addition, they can become involved in more specific vocational placements which form a component of a vocational course or school-industry program.

The value of such programs

Work experience

That students should be exposed to some form of work education or experience has been generally accepted with little argument. What is less clear is how this can best be done within the school program so that it improves student readiness for the world of work. Since the late 1960s, students in many Australian schools have been involved in some form of work education (Ministry of Education Victoria 1988). This has been in the form of courses aimed at helping students become aware of the various occupations open to them and their vocational aspirations; or having students spend some time in a work environment to gain information about the workplace. This latter activity is what is generally known as work experience. Work experience is often not part of a formal vocational course, nor are the skills that students learn formally assessed in the workplace or at school. As such, it is generally meant to be more of a work familiarisation exercise than a skills-building exercise. Ainley and Fleming (1995) report data from the ACER youth in transition surveys that show the overwhelming majority of students in government, catholic and independent schools had participated in work experience programs. Their data also revealed that students in independent schools had lower rates of participation than in other systems, and that girls were more likely to participate in work experience programs than boys.

The need for broader-based work education programs

Cole (1981) has been a little sceptical about the claims made for work experience programs. He feels that they should extend 'beyond narrow vocational experiences towards . . . work education experiences' (p. 9). These should provide students with the skills to 'meet the demands of a rapidly changing society and the uncertainties that are likely to exist throughout the next decade' (p. 9). Cole's analysis provided a rationale for the implementation of work education programs which integrated vocationally based work experience with school-based learning. In Victoria, some of his ideas influenced the development of the Innovative Work Education Project funded by the Transition Education Advisory Committee (TEAC). This project aimed to expand the nature of work experience programs so that students could improve their understanding of the 'real world' by exploring a variety of jobs, organisational structures, and the different jobs and roles of each individual (TEAC 1983, p. 2). Students were also encouraged to be responsible for the organisation of these placements. This would develop their sense of involvement and ownership.

The Innovative Work Education Project was conducted in seven schools from technical high school, high school and special school sectors. It investigated the effectiveness of different forms of organising work education in the various schools and identified the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

These approaches included the establishment of:

- small target groups in specific parts of the school
- year-level target groups
- broad-based target groups spanning a cross-section of all year levels
- special programs aimed at improving specific skills (e.g. independent travel programs for students in special schools)
- small group investigatory visits
- work assignments
- parent and employer involvement in the development of programs
- student meetings where they were expected to make decisions, solve problems and work in teams

The study concluded that for a work experience program to be a necessary component of the learning process, it must have both a classroom and workplace focus. The classroom focus would allow students to prepare for the placement and reflect upon what they had done on its completion. The workplace experience would allow them to gain first-hand knowledge of the work environment.

Evaluations of work experience programs

A ministerial review of work experience programs in Victoria (Ministry of Education Victoria 1988) showed that work experience programs allowed students to find out more about themselves and how they related to the world and their need to continue with further education and training. In addition, the review found that students, whether they were in public or private schools, perceived that work experience had benefits for them in terms of increased self-confidence and self-awareness.

The review also discovered that these programs allowed schools to develop stronger ties with their communities. Communities, in turn, were very committed to helping students achieve their goals through the program. The review also showed that females tended to choose much fewer job areas than males, and that employers were not always sure of what skills or experiences the programs were attempting to cover. In addition, it was noticed that there was no procedure in place to monitor the legal requirements covered by the act. That is, there were no monitoring mechanisms in place to help guard against the possible exploitation of students by unscrupulous employers.

The review also highlighted the costs that employers were required to meet. These included costs of paying students (in Victoria, students on work experience must be paid a nominal amount) as well as:

- costs of additional equipment and protective clothing (e.g. headgear, footwear, gloves and glasses)
- costs of telephone calls to schools, postage and staff members' time to write reports
- cost of staff members' time in supervising or teaching students

The review concluded that work education, comprising work experience, was an important educational tool in preparing students for adult life.

Benefits for students

The value of work experience programs for improving students' knowledge about work and careers is supported by researchers in the field. Eggleston (1992) believes that work experience can provide links between schools and industry that were absent in the past and make available work opportunities to students that were previously unknown to schools. In some cases, it provides pupils with employment even before they have completed the course.

Evans and Poole (1992) are of the opinion that work experience helps students to 'bridge the gulf between youth and adulthood'. It improves their knowledge of employment conditions and places them in a better position to assess whether or not they will be able to do a particular job. Work experience makes students aware of what further studies they will require to enter a particular occupation or industry, and provides them with an opportunity to learn about the organisation and its business operations. As well as improving students' knowledge about the world of work and career opportunities, work experience can provide students with opportunities to develop team work skills and organisational skills required to carry out the routines of work. These include requirements for regular attendance, appropriate dress and punctuality.

Case studies conducted in two Tasmanian and Western Australian high schools (Straton & Murray 1984) provide further evidence of the value of work experience for high school students in Year 10. The study found that students were able to develop a more 'realistic' understanding of the workplace and what was required to make choices about future jobs or careers. They claimed to increase their knowledge about the work they were involved in and what training skills or experience was required for the job. For some students, participation in work experience also resulted in enhanced social development. However, work experience seemed to have little effect on whether or not they decided to continue their schooling.

Concerns about resources

In evaluating the benefits of work experience programs, Straton and Murray raised a number of concerns. These related to the limited integration of work experience and time for follow-up activities into the school curriculum. They were also linked to the substantial resources required to set up and monitor placements by co-ordinators and to supervise students by workplace supervisors. The research concluded that in view of the substantial costs of work experience programs, students could be expected to learn much more during their time in the workplace. The researchers claim that increased student learning in the workplace can be derived from a greater clarification of general objectives for work experience programs and individuals and the better matching of placements to these objectives. In addition, they suggest that students and employers be adequately prepared for their roles and that follow-up activities be established to assist students to reflect on their experiences in the workplace.

To reduce costs, Straton and Murray advise schools to set up alliances with fewer employers so that less time and effort is expended in searching for placements and preparing employers to participate in programs. Close relationships between schools and employers may also reduce the necessity for frequent monitoring visits by co-ordinators.

Student outcomes

Evans and Poole (1992) report the results of a study they conducted in 1988 with 768 students from secondary schools and TAFE colleges. In this study, they measured students' satisfaction with work experience. They looked at the extent to which this experience produced changes in students' attitudes towards schools or colleges and in their feelings of competence. The study had students and observers rate time spent on activities and the extent to which work experience provided students with opportunities to learn about and achieve competence in a number of areas. These included developing good work habits, interpersonal and organisational skills, communication skills and reading, and writing and arithmetic skills. Students and observers gave high ratings to the opportunities that work experience gave them for demonstrating and developing punctuality, co-operation, assisting others, fitting in, honesty and persistence. They also gave high ratings to being accepted, benefiting others and taking initiative. Observers, however, also included in their list of highly ranked opportunities skills such as conforming, translating knowledge into action and striving for mastery (p. 121).

The findings also showed that 90 per cent of students reported being generally satisfied with their experience in the workplace. It had allowed them to obtain information about the work environment, develop some job-related skills and increase their perceptions of their own competence in these skills and in their abilities to improve them with further training. The experience had also provided them with benefits that they perceived would assist them in future employment.

Evans and Poole concluded that the 'main thrust' (p. 122) of work experience was to provide students with opportunities and skills which would help them fit into the workplace. In addition, they believed that the period of work experience for students was possibly too short to make any difference to the development of cognitive skills.

Vocational placements

A vocational placement is also a form of gaining experience in the workplace. It differs from general work experience in that it is part of a formal vocational course and requires students to spend substantial periods of time within workplaces. Vocational placements are essential components of school-industry programs generally funded by grants from the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and vocational courses endorsed by State boards of education.

A national survey of all schools conducted in 1995 and repeated in 1996 for the ASTF (Ainley & Fleming 1995) found that nearly half (46 per cent) of all schools offered school-industry programs in 1995 and almost two-thirds (62 per cent) provided such programs in 1996. In the main, these programs are generally run in conjunction with hospitality, retail, manufacturing, office, health and community services, and construction industries. They require students in Years 11 and 12 to spend extended periods of time within workplaces as a component of their normal studies. In addition, some of these programs also have dual recognition status which means that they can count towards high school certificates and post-secondary qualifications.

TRAC

The TRAC (Training for Retail and Commerce) program is offered in retail, office, hospitality and automotive industries. TRAC students can opt to complete the program in Years 11 or 12 or over the two years. Employers generally pay a management fee to have students and students may move between different firms during the program. In addition, they may access a TAFE course. At the end of the program, students are awarded a certificate by the local Chamber of Commerce.

According to Erica Smith (1994), many employers like the TRAC program because it is more focussed. That is, they find the skills list which is devised by local industry helpful and relevant to their businesses. In addition, employers are involved in the selection of TRAC students. Smith believes this provides a contrast to normal work experience programs where employers have to accept the students allocated to them based on teachers' evaluations of whether or not they are suitable.

E-team

The E-team program is another special school-industry program. It involves representatives from the Australian Quality Council, schools and industry, and aims to teach students about the principles of continuous improvement of work or total quality management. E-teams are made up of Year 11 students working in groups to help companies in their effort to achieve continuous improvement. Teams of students are allocated to companies to work on a particular problem the company has identified.

However, before students go into the workplace, they are given initial training. This aims to provide them with knowledge about quality improvement principles and practical skills for examining work processes and generating solutions to problems. They are also provided with basic skills in report writing, presentation and public speaking.

Once in the workplace, E-teams must examine the problem that has been identified for them, find out its true cause and identify ways in which it can be solved. E-teams are often required to compile a report on their findings. This report will then be presented to the managers who first identified the problem.

An independent evaluation of the program found that the E-team enabled students to acquire skills and knowledge which were important for quality improvement and which could be transported to other organisations. It also made it possible for participating organisations to harness the skills of students in helping them identify opportunities for quality improvement (Nett Effect 1994).

AVTS pilots

Vocational placements were also an integral component of the institutionally based AVTS pilot projects which were first implemented in 1993. The purpose of these pilots was to make training more relevant to the workplace. The evaluation of these pilots (DEET 1995) found employers to be generally in favour of providing vocational placements. Participation in the pilots gave them an opportunity to recruit employees, improve the supervisory skills of workers charged with training students, and improve morale in the workplace by providing selected staff with staff development opportunities. In addition, involvement helped employers to fulfill their community obligation to help young people prepare for the workforce and gave them an opportunity to promote and market their companies to the local community.

The evaluation also found that trainees were positive about being involved in the placements. They appreciated the opportunity these gave them to improve employment prospects through developing on-the-job competencies. Involvement in vocational placements also allowed trainees to experience what it was like in the workforce and to apply what they had learned in school to practical problems on the job.

Case studies

Case studies of six Australian schools by Cumming and Carbines (1997) also found that structured vocational placements were better than other work experience programs in terms of planning, organisation and skill development. This meant that employers, students and teachers were clear about their respective roles, the tasks to be accomplished and how outcomes would be measured. Having students in the workplace for extended periods of time was seen by the majority of employers to help students 'establish meaningful relationships' (p. 15) in the workplace. It also allowed them to experience a broader variety of tasks and activities.

A number of benefits were identified for this form of structured workplace learning by students, employers and teachers. Students perceived that these experiences would help them access part-time and full-time work. Employers perceived they had increased their knowledge and appreciation of young people and understanding of what education in schools was trying to achieve. Teachers believed their involvement had affected their beliefs and approaches to teaching and learning. They also valued the skills and knowledge students were able to acquire during their time in the workplace.

Summary

There seems to be ample evidence of the worth of general and more structured work experience programs. Less clear, however, are exactly what tasks students, employers and teachers perform in the selection and organisation of placements, the type of tasks that are expected of students in the workplace, and the essential skills and attributes that employers expect students to demonstrate. In addition, little has been done in examining the extent to which student expectations of experience in the workplace are actually fulfilled.

Although there have been recent evaluations of vocational placements, it has been almost 10 years since the last formal study of work experience. This study attempts to fill this gap.

Outline of report

Chapter 2 (Methodology) outlines the methodology to be used for the collection and analysis of data. It also makes some comment on the reliability and validity of the data.

Chapter 3 (Demographics) describes specific data about the subjects in the study.

Chapter 4 (Preliminary stages) provides information about how the arrangements for work experience are made. It also provides some discussion about the findings.

Chapter 5 (Occupations chosen by students) describes the different occupations that students have selected for work experience/ vocational placements. It comments on the differences between what careers students aspire to and the careers the training agenda would like them to follow.

Chapter 6 (Preparation and training) sets out the preparation and training for work experience/vocational placements undertaken by students, co-ordinators and supervisors. It also provides data on the additional training or information required by students, co-ordinators and supervisors. Comment is also provided on the findings.

Chapter 7 (Supervising, monitoring and assessing workplace performance) describes the arrangements made for training students and recording and assessing their performance. It provides information on suggestions for improving recording and assessing methods and the types of follow-up activities used in schools. The means by which vocational placement programs are evaluated are also included in this chapter. It concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 8 (Expectations and outcomes) describes what students and co-ordinators expect from student experience in the workplace. It provides data on the essential or desirable skills and attributes that supervisors expect students to demonstrate. The chapter also examines the relationship between these expectations and outcomes and reports on the extent to which offers of employment are received by and made to students. A discussion of these findings is also presented.

Chapter 9 (Workplace learning for students—perceived benefits) sets out the types of tasks students were involved in. It also makes some comments about the possibility of students learning these skills at school. It examines the benefits derived from workplace learning from the perspective of all three groups and provides information on the extent to which students, supervisors and co-ordinators are satisfied with the types of experiences provided to students. A discussion of these findings is also provided.

Chapter 10 (Conclusions and policy implications) provides summary conclusions from each chapter and sets out policy implications that can be derived from the findings.

Methodology

Aims

The principal aim of this study was to explore the assumptions which underlie the thinking about work experience and vocational placement programs as described in the literature and to document the extent to which these assumptions are warranted by the available evidence. A secondary aim was to investigate whether or not these programs are worth the effort expended by companies, schools and students.

Collection of data

The surveys

Data were collected by means of four questionnaire surveys. These included surveys of students who had participated in work experience and vocational placements in 1996, work experience and vocational placement co-ordinators in schools, co-ordinators of vocational placements and workplace supervisors.

Student survey

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey of students from a random sample of government and private schools receiving ASTF funding in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. Data were also collected from a random sample of private schools in Victoria and New South Wales appearing in the telephone listings; and private schools appearing on the listings of independent schools from the South Australian Association of Independent Schools, and listings from the Tasmania Office of Catholic Education. In addition, non-systemic Catholic schools in Queensland who were contacted by their department of education to be involved in the study and agreed to do so were also included.

The student questionnaire gathered information on the nature of the experience, the role the student played in setting it up, and the extent to which expectations had been met. The student questionnaire appears in appendix A.

Teacher survey

Data were also collected from teachers responsible for the co-ordination of work experience/vocational placements in these schools. The survey questionnaire for this group appears in appendix B.

Vocational placement co-ordinator survey

Questionnaires were sent to all ASTF program co-ordinators from Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales. A copy of this survey appears in appendix C.

Workplace supervisor survey

A sample of employers identified by student responses as having provided work experience or vocational placements were sent questionnaires. A copy of this questionnaire appears in appendix D.

Scope of the surveys

Questionnaires which were sent to teachers responsible for co-ordinating work experience and vocational placements in schools, vocational placement program co-ordinators and workplace supervisors gathered information on the organisation of the program. This included the selection of and co-ordination of students and placements; preparation of co-ordinators, students and workplace supervisors for their roles; workplace training and assessment of skills; and perceived benefits. In addition, workplace supervisors were asked to rate the extent to which students demonstrated a range of specific skills and attitudes.

Response rates

Completed questionnaires were received from:

- 2285 students in Years 10, 11 and 12 from 58 schools from government and private school systems in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales and from private school systems in Victoria and Tasmania. A total of 7068 questionnaires to be administered to students were sent to schools. Of these, 2316 were returned as completed questionnaires and 928 were returned as not administered questionnaires. This represents 37.7 per cent of the total number of questionnaires that were distributed to schools minus the number of questionnaires that schools returned as having not been administered to students. Of these, only 2285 questionnaires were included in the final analysis. The remaining 31 questionnaires were discarded because significant parts of the questionnaire were not completed or students reported that they had not been involved in any work experience or vocational placements.

  The return rate for schools varied greatly. Almost a third (27.7%) of the schools had a return rate of between 50 and 100 per cent. About a fifth (19%) had a return rate of between 20 and 49 per cent. For the remainder, the percentage was lower than 20 per cent.

  These return rates have been calculated by taking the total number of completed questionnaires as a percentage of the total number of distributed questionnaires minus the number of questionnaires returned as not having been administered. However, we cannot be sure that schools administered all the questionnaires that they were sent in the first place. Extremely low return rates may be more a function of large numbers of questionnaires not being administered by schools or returned to researchers, rather than students being unwilling to complete the questionnaires.

- 170 co-ordinators of vocational placement programs from these States. This represented a 39.0 per cent return rate.
- 41 teacher co-ordinators of work experience programs and vocational placement programs of schools involved in the study. This represented a 70.6 per cent return rate.
- 292 employers hosting work experience and vocational placement students. This represented a 30.1 per cent return rate.

Analysis of data

Data from the questionnaires were entered into a custom-made program developed by Mr Hon Kok Fai from NCVER's data management and analysis branch. These were then downloaded into SPSS software for analysis. Preliminary analysis showed that not all respondents provided answers to all questions. Although the response rate for the great majority of questions for all groups was over 80 per cent and generally in the over 90 per cent range, response rates for questions for students varied from between 59.5 per cent to 100.0 per cent. For teachers, it was 64.2 per cent to 100.0 per cent. For vocational placement co-ordinators, it was 73.5 per cent to 100.0 per cent. For workplace supervisors, it was 60.9 per cent to 98.9 per cent. Questions which asked respondents to provide self-reports tended to provide fewer responses than those which asked respondents to select responses from a number of options.

Findings are presented in the next eight chapters. Data are generally presented in tabular form, and are described in terms of the number of cases, percentage of cases and percentage of responses. Percentage of cases describes responses to multiple response questions according to the number of respondents providing answers to each item in the question. Percentage of responses describes the number of responses for a particular item as a proportion of all responses provided.

Data in the 'percentage of responses' columns are always meant to provide a total of 100 per cent. However, data may not always exactly total 100 per cent due to rounding.

A comprehensive approach to data collection

This study has gathered information from four different groups to gain a more accurate picture of the arrangements that are made in schools and workplaces to facilitate work experience/vocational placement programs. It has also based its evaluation of the worth of these programs by gaining information from students involved in the programs, vocational placement co-ordinators, teachers in schools responsible for the co-ordination of programs and workplace supervisors. These groups were asked to reflect on their experiences and indicate the extent to which expectations have been fulfilled and benefits have been obtained.

Conclusions about the program's worth were based on the opinions of four different groups of respondents. This increases the strength of the findings and provides a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in schools and workplaces with regard to work experience/vocational placements.

The reports of a wide range of participants were taken into account, which also adds validity to the findings. These included those who have participated in work experience/vocational placement programs, those who have provided on or off-the-job training, and those who have facilitated the arrangements.

Demographics

Students

A total of 2285 completed surveys were returned from students from 58 schools which were included in the study. Of these schools, 16 were from Queensland, four from Tasmania, 17 from South Australia, five from Victoria and 15 from New South Wales. Non-government schools comprised 55.2 per cent of the sample.

More than half (52.3%) of the students were in Year 10. Students in Year 11 formed the next largest group (40.2%). A small proportion (7.3%) of students were from Year 12. Only four students were in Year 13. The majority (58.11%) of students were female.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of students from each year level according to State.

Table 1: Year level of students by State

Year level	Qld	NSW	Tas	Vic	SA	Not reported	Total	%
Year 10	88	487	205	171	243	1	1195	52.3
Year 11	320	138	6	4	451	-	919	40.2
Year 12	118	25	15	1	7	-	166	7.3
Year 13	2	2	-	-	-	-	4	0.2
Not reported	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.0
	528	**652**	**226**	**176**	**702**	**1**	**2285**	**100.0**

The overwhelming majority (89.8%) of the students were involved in work experience. Just over a tenth (10.2%) were involved in vocational placements.

Students involved in both work experience and vocational placements were asked to respond to questions in terms of their experience in vocational placement. Almost all (96.8%) of the Year 10 students were involved in work experience with only a small group of 38 students involved only in vocational placements.

Vocational placement programs

Just over a tenth of the students in the study were involved in vocational placement programs. Just under three-quarters of these identified the type of placement program they were involved in. The remainder failed to provide adequate details for program identification. These details are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Student involvement in vocational placement programs

Program type	No. of students	% of responses
Hospitality (including industry studies programs)	57	24.4
Special Year 10 vocational placements	38	16.2
Early childhood studies	33	14.1
TRAC programs	19	8.1
Retail	16	6.8
Engineering	11	4.7
Childcare	8	3.4
E-team	7	3.0 *
Construction (furnishings, carpentry/building/joinery)	6	2.6
Others (pedicure, community studies, e-mail program)	6	2.6
Commerce (banking, travel, business, clerical)	5	2.1
Not specified	28	2.1
	234	**100.0**

* E-team programs have been included because placements have a specific focus.

Co-ordinators of work experience and vocational placements

Work experience

Completed questionnaires were received from 41 teachers responsible for the co-ordination of work experience programs in the study schools.

Vocational placements

Completed questionnaires were received from a total of 170 vocational placement co-ordinators. These included co-ordinators in TRAC and E-team programs and co-ordinators based in schools. This represented a return rate of 39.0 per cent. Completed questionnaires were also received from 28 teachers responsible for the co-ordination of vocational placement programs in the study schools.

Co-ordinators in this study were responsible for a total of 523 schools, with more than half (55.2%) responsible for the programs of a single school. Almost two-thirds of the group (64.1%) were responsible for between one and two schools. Table 3 gives a detailed breakdown of the number of school programs co-ordinated by respondents in the study.

Table 3: Number of schools in programs administered by vocational placement co-ordinators

Number of co-ordinators	Percentage of co-ordinators	Number of schools
94	55.3	1
15	8.8	2
14	8.2	3
8	4.7	not provided
8	4.7	12
7	4.1	4
5	2.9	5
5	2.9	15
4	2.4	8
3	1.7	6
3	1.7	7
2	1.2	9
1	0.6	10
1	0.6	46 *
170	**100.0**	**523 ***

* This co-ordinator had national responsibility for all E-team programs.

* Total of all schools identified by co-ordinators.

Supervisors

A total of 292 completed questionnaires were received from workplace supervisors. This represented a 30.1 per cent return rate. Of these, one-quarter (25%) had only been involved in providing placements for work experience students; a small percentage (1.7%) had only been involved in providing vocational placements. The great majority (73.3%) had provided both vocational placements and work experience for students. Between them, they had provided work experience/vocational placements for a total of 4844 students in 1996. Before that they had provided such placements for a total of 4833 students. However, at least 17 employers who had provided placements prior to 1996 could not give an exact figure on the number of placements they had provided in the past. These totals represent a median figure of between 5 and 5.5 students per employer.

Part-time employment

When students were asked whether or not they had a part-time job, 92 per cent chose to respond to the question. Just under half (45.1%) of the work experience students and a greater proportion (53.5%) of vocational placement students indicated that they worked part-time. Of these, only a small percentage (5.0%) of work experience students and 9.6 per cent of the vocational placement students indicated they had any intentions of making their part-time work a full-time career.

Employer contributions

Almost a quarter (22.4%) of the co-ordinators in this study indicated that employers involved in their programs made a financial contribution to their programs. In the main, these were concerned with the TRAC program, where employers were expected to provide between $75 and $280 per year.

Almost three quarters (71.8%) of the co-ordinators in this study reported that employers involved in their programs did not contribute financially to the programs.

Details on the contributions made by employers appear in appendix E.

Planning the placements

Responsibility for workplace selection

Student survey

The overwhelming majority of work experience students and just over half of the vocational placement students claimed they were involved in some way in selecting organisations in which they would do their work experience/vocational placements. Parents, however, were only minimally involved in the selection of workplaces. Teachers and work placement co-ordinators were far more likely to be involved in choosing workplaces for students in vocational placements than for work experience students.

Table 4 presents details on the responsibility for choice of work experience or vocational placement.

In this table, and in tables throughout the study, the multiple responses are represented by two sets of data. The percentage (%) of cases data set is based on the number of persons giving the response. The percentage of responses data set is based on the percentage of all the responses provided.

Table 4: Responsibility for choosing work experience or vocational placement locations

Responsibility	Work experience (n=1950)		Vocational placements (n=226)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Student	88.9	77.4	51.7	42.8
Workplace co-ordinator	9.4	8.2	15.0	12.5
Teacher	9.1	7.9	51.3	42.5
Parent	7.4	6.4	2.7	2.2
	114.8	**100.0**	**120.7**	**100.0**

From table 4, it is evident that students are almost twice as likely to be involved in choosing their work experience placements as they are for their vocational placements. By contrast, teachers are more than five times as likely to be involved in choosing locations for vocational placements as they are for work experience.

Co-ordinator survey

The workplace co-ordinator was the individual most frequently identified to be involved in making decisions about the organisation in which a vocational placement would take place. The least likely individual to make this decision was the workplace supervisor. Table 5 provides this information in greater detail.

Table 5: Responsibility for making decisions about the organisation in which the vocational placement will take place (n=160)

Responsibility	% of cases	% of responses
Workplace co-ordinator	86.3	50.2
Student	61.3	35.6
Workplace supervisor	24.4	14.2
	172.0	**100.0**

Others involved in making these decisions were teachers (n=10), program co-ordinators (n=3), management committee or groups (n=2). At least three co-ordinators indicated that the selection of the organisation was negotiated and two indicated that co-ordinators, students and supervisors were all involved in the process.

Organising placements—the role of students

Student survey

Students were asked to specify their roles in organising the placements. Few students reported that they had done nothing to arrange their work experience. The arrangement of vocational placements was most likely to be organised by co-ordinators and teachers. The role most frequently reported by students was to provide a list of preferred workplaces or industry options to career advisors or teachers. The next most frequently reported role was to find a placement by contacting numerous places to seek a position. This was followed by acquiring and arranging a position through relations and friends. A comprehensive breakdown of the data describing the different roles performed by students in organising placements appears in table 6.

Table 6: Student role in organising work experience and vocational placements (n=1883)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Finding a placement by writing, calling or applying in person to various organisations	433	23.0	22.9
Providing a list of preferred workplaces or industry options to co-ordinators	415	22.0	22.0
Acquiring position through parents, friends or relatives	168	8.9	8.9
Applying for job in person and making follow-up arrangements	146	7.8	7.8
Contacting employer by telephone	142	7.5	7.5
Contacting employer for details of hours, dress and other requirements	83	4.4	4.4
Making initial telephone call to employer followed up by further telephone call, visit or letter	83	4.4	4.4
Writing letter to employer followed up by telephone call or further letter	70	3.7	3.7
Making contact with employer and arranging or attending interviews	69	3.7	3.7
Nothing, teachers and co-ordinators do everything	66	3.5	3.5
Making contact with employer and confirming arrangements	64	3.4	3.4
Visiting the workplace prior to work experience	52	2.8	2.8
Locating jobs and making all necessary arrangements	48	2.5	2.6
Discussing options with parents or co-ordinators	22	1.2	1.2
Completing forms only	21	1.1	1.1
Arranging transport and accommodation	5	0.3	0.3
	1887		**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

When co-ordinators were asked to describe what students were expected to do in organising vocational placements, they identified at least 37 different student activities. The most frequently identified student activity related to providing co-ordinators with a list of preferred placements, industries or employers. This was followed by contacting or visiting employers to obtain details of times and other requirements. The third most frequently reported activity concerned contacting and visiting employers for the purpose of meeting with them prior to work placements and completing the necessary forms and documents. A comprehensive breakdown of activities expected of students in organising the placement is presented in table 7.

Table 7: Activities describing the role of students in organising work placements (n=159)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Providing co-ordinators with names of preferred industry or employer	31	19.5	15.5
Arranging, attending meetings or interviews with employers	28	14.0	14.0
Contacting or visiting employers to organise details of times and requirements	25	15.7	12.5
Contacting employers to introduce themselves and visit prior to commencement of vocational placements	24	15.1	12.0
Completing necessary documents and forms	24	15.1	12.0
Contacting employer prior to vocational placement	19	11.9	9.5
Organising everything required for the placement	10	6.3	5.0
Locating the placement	9	5.7	4.5
Locating and visiting employer prior to the placement	5	3.1	2.5
Preparing for attending placement	5	3.1	2.5
Completing applications for the program	4	2.5	2.0
Discussing placements with parents, teachers and co-ordinators	3	1.9	1.5
Others	13	8.1	6.5
	200	**125.8**	**100.0**

Co-ordinators reported that there was no specific organising role for students in at least 18 cases.

Organising the placements—the role of co-ordinators

Co-ordinator survey

In describing their own roles in organising vocational placements, co-ordinators identified at least 56 different types of activities. The most frequently reported single activity related to making the initial contact with employers. The next most frequently reported activity was explaining the expectations and requirements of the programs. This was followed by making visits to the workplace to either monitor student progress or make sure that the student's first day went smoothly. A comprehensive breakdown of the activities performed by co-ordinators in organising placements appears in table 8.

Table 8: Activities performed by co-ordinators in organising placements (n=161)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Making initial contact with or recruiting employers to accept students	84	52.2	22.5
Negotiating skills training and requirements (e.g. explaining to employers the expectations and requirements of the program and roles and responsibility for assessment and training)	72	44.7	19.3
Providing support for students and workplace supervisors (e.g. training, assistance)	36	22.4	9.7
Overseeing the paperwork requirements (e.g. insurance agreement, forms, approvals)	31	19.3	8.3
Visiting the workplace to meet employers and to evaluate their suitability for the program	29	18.0	7.8
Visiting the workplace to monitor student progress (e.g. ensuring that the student's first day went smoothly, checking activities etc.)	26	16.1	7.0
Arranging and conducting interviews for the selection of students	20	12.4	5.4
Negotiating and arranging dates for placements	18	11.2	4.8
Evaluating programs (e.g. receiving and providing feedback)	12	7.5	3.2
Marketing the program (e.g. providing information to schools, parents and employers)	10	6.2	2.7
Recruiting students and schools to the program	7	4.3	1.9
Troubleshooting when required	5	3.1	1.3
Overall co-ordination of program	5	3.1	1.3
Others	18	11.2	4.8
	373	**231.7**	**100.0**

Organising the placements—the role of supervisors

Co-ordinator survey

According to co-ordinators in this study, the most frequently reported role performed by supervisors was to provide adequate supervision for students. This was followed by being willing to participate in the program and accept students for placements. Table 9 provides details on each of the different activities performed by employers in organising placements.

Table 9: Activities performed by employers in organising placements (n=156)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Negotiation and determination of appropriate tasks for students and provision of structured training	53	33.9	17.0
Willingness to participate in program and accept students	46	29.4	14.8
Provision of adequate supervision for student learning	45	28.8	14.5
Provision of assessment of students (e.g. via logbooks, other assessment procedures, assessors)	32	20.5	10.3
Interviewing of students	25	16.0	8.0
Completing paperwork (e.g. sign agreements, legal documents, insurance etc.)	24	15.4	7.7
Arranging times, date and student timetable of activities	12	7.7	3.9
Placing students in appropriate location and monitoring of work placement training and assessment	12	7.7	3.9
Attending information sessions or reading information on vocational placements	11	7.1	3.5
Liaising and consulting with teachers and co-ordinators	10	6.4	3.2
Providing feedback	9	5.8	2.9
Allowing supervisors to attend training	8	5.8	2.6
Participating on management committees or on selection panels	8	5.8	2.6
Payment of fees	6	3.8	1.9
Determining what company can offer	5	3.2	1.6
Other	5	3.2	1.6
	311	**200.5**	**100.0**

At least five co-ordinators indicated that employers were not expected to perform any role in organising the placement.

Supervisor survey

Over two-thirds of the supervisors (67.1%) indicated that their organisation had no input into the selection of students for work experience/vocational placements. For those (31.8%) who had a say in the selection of students, the most frequent type of input related to interviewing students before accepting them for placements. The second most frequent type of activity related to ensuring that schools respected their criteria for selection. These included students being in nominated grade levels and having a genuine interest in the field of study. Organisations were also involved in assessing written applications and résumés, and accepting or refusing to accept students. Table 10 sets out the various types of inputs that organisations have in the selection of students.

Table 10: Organisational input into the selection of students (n=93)

Nature of input	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Interviewing students prior to accepting them	32	34.4	27.8
Prescribing selection criteria (e.g. grade level, interest in vocation or subject area)	22	23.7	19.1
Providing job descriptions and person specifications and assessing skill levels, job applications and résumés	20	21.5	17.4
Accepting or refusing to accept student (e.g. suitability for position, time available for placement job)	20	21.5	17.4
Consulting or liaising with careers advisors or work placement co-ordinators	7	7.5	6.1
Accepting students of local parents who are relatives of employees or customers or appropriate students who are known to organisation	6	6.5	5.2
Others	8	8.6	7.0
	115	**123.7**	**100.0**

Interviews

In addition, about one-third (30.5%) had interviewed students prior to accepting them for a placement. These respondents were asked to specify the purpose of these interviews. The most frequently reported purpose related to assessing the student's suitability for the organisation. This was followed by using the interview to give students information on details such as dress requirements, start and finish times, breaks etc. Table 11 provides a comprehensive account of the purposes for which student interviews are used by employers.

Table 11: The purpose of interviews conducted by employers prior to accepting students for work experience/vocational placements (n=86)

Purpose of interviews	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Assessing students' suitability for the organisation (e.g. abilities, personality, attitude)	28	32.6	18.9
Providing employers with opportunity to meet with and find out about students interests (e.g. background, aims, expectations)	17	19.8	11.5
Informing students of requirements (e.g. dress, safety clothing, start and finish times, time sheets, breaks etc.)	16	18.6	10.8
Informing students of employer expectations	14	16.3	9.5
Assessing whether or not student is interested in career	13	15.1	8.8
Assessing student suitability for job or industry and selecting right applicant	12	14.0	8.1
Providing students with outline of duties and responsibilities	10	11.6	6.8
Involving students in orientation exercise (e.g. familiarisation with workplace, put student at ease, introduce to staff)	10	11.6	6.8
Providing opportunity for employers to discuss relevant issues with students (e.g. answer students' questions, complete documents)	8	9.3	5.4
Providing students with opportunity to experience formal interview process	7	8.1	4.7
Assessing student attributes (e.g. initiative, willingness to learn, communication skills, team skills, maturity)	7	8.1	4.7
Assess students' presentation and appearance	6	7.0	4.1
	148	**172.1**	**100.0**

Criteria for the selection of student and employer participants

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to specify the criteria employers had to satisfy before being able to take students for work experience/vocational placements. The most frequently reported criterion for employers was their ability to provide a suitable environment, followed by their ability to provide a safe and caring environment and their willingness to have students.

A breakdown of these findings appears in table 12.

Table 12: Criteria for the selection of employers as specified by teachers' criteria for the selection of employers (n=41)

Activity	No. of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Ability to provide suitable training environment (e.g. appropriate size, structure, volume of business, qualified trainers, willingness to train and assess students)	19	46.3	30.2
Ability to provide safe and caring environment	14	34.1	22.2
Willingness to have students	14	34.1	22.2
Interested in program and students	6	14.6	9.5
Provision of appropriate experience in the past	5	12.2	7.9
No criteria	2	4.9	3.2
Other (e.g. no industrial problems, no discrimination, accepted by parents, accepted by co-ordinator)	3	7.3	4.8
	63	**153.5**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Before students and employers were selected for a vocational program they were required to satisfy a number of criteria. Co-ordinators were asked to provide information on what criteria students and employers were expected to satisfy.

Selection of students

A total of 84 different types of criteria were reported. The most frequently identified criterion related to the students' demonstrated interest and willingness to be involved in the program and preparedness to meet the demands of the course. This was followed by criteria related to demonstrated knowledge, competence, ability to successfully complete the program and completion of prerequisites. The third most frequently reported criteria dealt with the ability to successfully complete aspects of the selection process. A comprehensive breakdown of criteria reported by co-ordinators for the selection of students for programs appears in table 13.

Table 13: Criteria for the selection of students into vocational programs as specified by co-ordinators (n=162)

Criteria for student selection	No. of cases	% of cases	% of respondents
Demonstrated interest and willingness to meet demands of the programs (motivation, keenness, interest etc.)	103	63.6	29.4
Demonstrated knowledge and competence to be accepted into program (satisfactory reports, prerequisites, suitability for program, work readiness, industry experience, ability to cope with program)	87	53.7	24.9
Ability to successfully deal with selection processes (prepare applications, attend interviews, prepare résumés, etc.)	81	50.0	23.1
Appropriate and personal and interpersonal qualities (responsibility, maturity, reliability, honesty, attitude, presentation etc.)	47	29.0	13.4
Enrolled in subject	19	11.7	5.4
Other	13	8.0	3.7
	350	**216.0**	**100.0**

A small group (5.8%) reported that students did not have to satisfy any criteria to be accepted.

Selection of employers

At least 47 different types of criteria for the selection of employers were identified by co-ordinators in this study. These dealt with the interest and willingness of the employer to be involved in the program, their capacity for training, the provision of appropriate supervisors and compliance with the appropriate standards and requirements of the programs.

The most frequently reported single criterion for the selection of employers related to the capacity of the employer to provide appropriate skills training and facilities. The second most frequently reported single criterion was related to the employer's interest and commitment to the program and willingness to participate and train students. This was followed by the employer's ability to provide competent supervisors and ones who had received workplace or assessor training. At least four co-ordinators reported that they had no specific criteria in place for the selection of employers. A comprehensive breakdown of the frequently reported criteria for the selection of employers appears in table 14.

Table 14: Criteria for the selection of the employer participants in the program as specified by co-ordinators (n=165)

Criteria	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Understanding of program requirements and capacity to provide appropriate skills training and facilities (structured learning etc.)	90	54.5	26.9
Commitment and willingness to participate in the program and train students	56	33.9	16.7
Provision or preparedness to provide qualified and experienced supervisors and those who had had workplace assessor training and supervisor training	51	30.9	15.2
Ability to provide a safe and responsible environment	27	16.4	8.1
Selected as suitable by teachers or management committees (based on visits, interviews, or prior knowledge of reputation of company)	22	13.3	6.7
Willingness to comply with assessment requirements (completion of logbooks, accurate assessments, checklists etc.)	21	12.7	6.3
Ability to provide adequate time for supervision	14	8.5	4.2
Willing to make appropriate payments (e.g. management fee, insurance cover)	14	8.5	4.2
Simply being willing and agreeing to take students	13	7.9	3.9
Supported by appropriate bodies (industry associations, education department)	9	5.5	2.7
No specific criteria used	4	2.4	1.2
Other	14	8.5	4.2
	335	**203.0**	**100.0**

Supervisor survey

Supervisors in this study generally indicated that their organisations required specific information from schools before they would agree to accept students into the workplace. The most frequently identified type of information required by employers in this study related to insurance cover for students, followed by information on the objectives of the placement. Very few supervisors indicated that they required no information at all. Table 15 presents data on these requirements. In this table and all the following tables using these three supervisor groupings, the column for vocational placement describes those supervisors who had overseen vocational placements. This includes those who had supervised both work experience and vocational placements.

Table 15: Information required by supervisors before agreeing to accept students into the workplace (n=152)

Information	**All supervisors (n=152)**		**Work experience only (n=105)**		**Vocational placement (n=47)**	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Insurance cover for students	83.6	28.5	81.0	29.4	89.4	26.9
Objectives of placement	61.8	21.1	56.2	20.4	74.5	22.4
Student's educational level	57.9	19.8	56.2	20.4	61.7	18.6
Student's special medical details	38.2	13.0	34.3	12.5	46.8	14.1
Subjects undertaken by student	32.2	11.0	28.6	10.4	40.4	12.1
Organisation's financial obligations	19.1	6.5	19.0	6.9	19.1	5.8
	292.8	**100.0**	**275.3**	**100.0**	**331.9**	**100.0**

From table 15, it is evident that companies providing vocational placements are more likely to require information on the objectives of the placement and the educational level of the student than those providing work experience only. They are also more likely to want to know more about the background of the student with regard to educational level, medical problems and subjects being undertaken.

Other supervisor requirements are presented in appendix F1.

Finding appropriate workplaces for vocational placements

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to specify the problems, if any, that they experienced in finding appropriate workplace sites for students. The most frequently identified problem related to finding enough suitable employers willing to take students. This was followed by lack of industries providing skills required by students in a particular area.

Table 16 presents details on the types of problems experienced by vocational placement co-ordinators in accessing workplace sites.

Table 16: Problems experienced by co-ordinators in accessing appropriate workplace sites for students (n=140)

Problem	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Finding enough suitable employers willing or able to take students at appropriate times	75	53.5	38.5
Lack of industries able to provide enough work and required skills in particular locations (e.g. large businesses, specialist skills)	27	19.3	13.8
Student issues (e.g. unclear about expectations, lateness in organising, don't meet employers' expectations, limited range of experience, overwork, language problems, disabled students difficult to place, lack of confidence, transport, age)	25	17.9	12.8
Competition for employers between schools and overuse of same employers	18	12.9	9.2
Time and effort required to recruit, monitor and organise placements	14	10.0	7.2
Employer training and assessment difficulties (logbook too time consuming, lack of workplace assessors, availability of suitably trained workers and supervisors)	14	10.0	7.1
Finding employers willing to pay (fees too high, supervisor training costs too high)	11	7.9	5.6
Employers lack of knowledge of what is required	11	7.9	5.6
	195	**139.4**	**100.0**

Other issues

Informing teachers of absences

Student survey

Students were asked to indicate whose responsibility it was to let teachers know of their absence from school when they were attending work experience/vocational placements. Students indicated this was the student's responsibility in just over a third (36.0%) of cases. However, vocational placement students were far more likely than work experience students to have responsibility for informing teachers. Co-ordinators were responsible for informing teachers of a student's absence from school for work experience purposes in 37.8 per cent of cases. Others who had major responsibility for letting subject teachers know of student absences due to work experience/vocational placements were teachers, work experience co-ordinators and career advisors.

A substantial number of students also reported that there was no need to inform teachers because they already knew that students would be away; it was part of the school organised program or was conducted during the school holidays. Table 17 presents extra information on the responsibility for informing of absences during work experience or vocational placements.

Table 17: Responsibility for letting subject teachers know of student absences due to work experience/vocational placements (n=621)

Responsibility	Number	Percentage
Work experience co-ordinators and career counsellors or advisors are responsible for informing subject teachers	207	33.3
Common knowledge as everyone does it at the same time	114	18.4
Part of school program or organised by the school	92	14.5
Teachers are already aware of the absences	79	12.7
Work experience is done during school holidays	61	9.8
Teachers/year-level co-ordinators are responsible for informing subject teachers	54	7.7
It is no one's responsibility	18	2.9
Parents are responsible for informing subject teachers of their children's absence	5	0.01
Other	18	2.9
	648	**100.0**

Work experience and vocational placements were scheduled at the same time for year levels for the great majority of work experience students (79.2%) and for just over half (56.4%) of vocational placement students.

Consequences of non-participation

Student survey

Well over a third (41.1%) of the students reported that there were no consequences for non-participation in work experience or vocational placements. The most frequently reported consequence for non-participation in vocational placements and work experience for all students was the non-completion of courses. Table 18 presents this information for both vocational placement and work experience students.

Table 18: Consequences of not doing work experience/vocational placements

Consequence	Work experience (n=899)		Vocational placements (n=167)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Students do not complete courses	85.9	73.5	92.8	76.4
Students cannot take up leadership positions	18.8	16.1	10.8	8.7
Students do not graduate	12.2	10.5	18.0	14.8
	116.9	**100.0**	**121.6**	**100.0**

Students also provided other comments. A small percentage (4.0%) of all students indicated that they would miss out on the opportunity to learn about particular jobs and work life. Another small group (2.6%) reported that students would not receive their work experience certificates and 1.2 per cent of all students reported that they would have to stay and work back at school. That they had no option but to attend work experience/vocational placements was reported by 4.1 per cent of students. Others (3.3%) indicated that they did not know or were not sure of the consequences for not attending work experience or vocational placements. Appendix F details the different consequences of not participating in compulsory work experience or vocational placements identified by students.

Co-ordinator survey

The consequences of students choosing not to participate in vocational placements are varied. The most frequently reported consequence was inability to complete the course, followed by inability to acquire competency and inability to gain the module. There were few instances where co-ordinators reported that there would be no consequences for students not doing the vocational placement. Table 19 gives a breakdown of these results.

Table 19: Consequences of students choosing not to participate in compulsory vocational placements (n=125)

Consequences	% of cases	% of responses
Do not/ cannot complete course	81.6	31.2
Do not/ cannot acquire competency	70.4	26.9
Do not/ cannot gain module	68.0	26.0
Do not/ cannot graduate	33.6	12.8
Do not/ cannot take up leadership positions	8.0	3.1
	261.6	**100.0**

Other reported consequences appear in appendix F.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that schools are prepared to allocate resources in the form of staff and time to ensure that organisation of work experience/vocational placement programs get off to a good start. This is evident in the major role played by 'specialist' teachers in overseeing the process of selecting and organising work experience and vocational placements, and in the pre-placement training received by students.

Increasing student involvement

There is no doubt that schools will want to vet organisations for occupational health and safety reasons and to ensure that the workplace can deliver the experience or training required by the student. However, this study shows that teachers and co-ordinators are, in many cases, also playing a major role in finalising arrangements for these placements, leaving students mainly responsible for providing preferences or contacting employers to arrange dates and times. This is especially so for vocational placement students.

The process for providing students with access to experience in the workplace needs to be monitored and controlled. However, increasing the involvement of students in the selection and organisation of the placements can only have positive benefits for them in the long run. It will give them a preliminary introduction to what it is like to search and apply for jobs. Even though there is less chance of them experiencing the rejection they may encounter when looking for a paid job, they will nevertheless gain valuable experience in approaching employers with a request for work experience/vocational placements. In addition, they will learn about the need to represent themselves in a positive light when they are searching for a job. The preparation of résumés and job applications, as well as the experience of attending an interview, can better prepare students for job searching when they leave school or while they are still at school.

Using student networks

It is also interesting to note that students are acquiring placements by using networks of friends and family. Although this may appear to be an easy way out, students, also need to learn that this is the way that many people obtain jobs. There is one way to give students job searching skills at the same time as using their private networks. This is to make sure that the student is responsible for making all necessary arrangements with the workplace that has been identified by parents or friends and relatives.

Arranging vocational placements

Vocational placement programs are generally intended to be more structured and comprehensive than work experience. Thus, it stands to reason that teachers and workplace co-ordinators are less willing to leave the responsibility for selecting and organising placements up to students. Teachers will necessarily want to be involved in the setting up of placements to ensure that workplaces have the necessary facilities, capacity and expertise to deliver and assess training. By protecting students from unsuitable workplaces, however, teachers of vocational placement students may, also be denying them some extremely valuable types of experience in job searching. Although searching for jobs is not necessarily more important than actually developing skills on the job, it should be a crucial part of entry-level training. Students need to be given more responsibility in setting up their own work placements. This can occur by students negotiating with employers whether or not they can deliver the required competencies, and providing this information to teachers so that teachers can then make the necessary checks. In this way, students are still having the experience of searching for and setting up the placement.

Increasing employer involvement

The involvement of workplace supervisors in the organisation of placements in far less obvious, with only about one-quarter of them reporting that they had any major input into this process. This input was in the form of interviewing students and prescribing criteria for selection.

It seems that there are still substantial numbers of employers who are not being actively involved in the organisation of placements. It is also evident that co-ordinators do not see that being part of this initial organisation should be a major role for employers. Employers were, in the main, expected to make sure that they could provide adequate training and supervision. For some co-ordinators, it was enough for employers merely to say that they were willing to accept students. There are two possible reasons for this. Schools may not want to make the process too cumbersome and encroach too much on employer time. On the other hand, they may not have the resources to set up consultations with employers to ensure they are involved in the setting up of placements from the beginning of the process.

Although it is true that employers may not have the time to be involved in organising specific activities (preparation of checklists, logbooks, timetables etc.), it seems that they could have much to offer when the purposes of placements are developed. This input could be provided at orientation meetings, through regular feedback or formal evaluation surveys. In this way, employers can be clear about the purposes and objectives of the programs and can help to prepare their workforces for when students arrive in the workplace.

Providing more placements

One of the most difficult problems for co-ordinators was finding employers who were willing and able to take students. Co-ordinators in rural and regional areas complained about the difficulties of providing students with work experience in large businesses or in firms which provided specialist skills.

Other problems dealt with competition among schools for the same employers, and the over-use of employers. Where involvement attracted a management fee to be paid to a special school industry program, finding enough employers willing to pay the fee also proved difficult for co-ordinators.

Finding enough suitable placements for students is a perennial problem. It will become even more difficult as the push for schools to introduced vocationally based courses increases and other providers of training compete for the same employers. To reduce such problems, co-ordinators in schools may need to develop a local system for ensuring that providers access vocational placements at different times of the school or academic year.

In addition, a co-ordinated approach to recruiting employers can also ensure that employers are not over-used and constantly bombarded with requests for work experience. In this way, they too can better plan for placements and allocate staff and time to training and supervising students.

Structuring the placements

Time allocation

Student survey

The average number of days spent in the workplace for all students was six (standard deviation 5.0). The median number of days spent in the workplace for the total group was five. However, vocational placement students were far more likely to spend an extended period of time in the workplace than work experience students. It is interesting to note that substantial numbers of work experience students also reported spending between six and ten days in the workplace. A breakdown of the total number of days spent by work experience and vocational placement students appears in table 20.

Table 20: Number of days spent in the workplace by students (Vocational placement n=228, work experience n=1973)

	Work experience		Vocational placements	
Days	n	%	n	%
1-4	207	10.5	6	2.6
5	1529	77.5	84	36.8
6-8	41	2.1	13	5.7
9-10	159	8.1	60	26.3
11-15	33	1.7	11	4.8
16-20	4	0.2	10	4.4
21-40	-	-	44	19.3
	1973	**100.0**	**228**	**100.0**

Mode

The most frequently used mode for time spent in the workplace as identified by both work experience and vocational placement students was the one-week block. However, there was a significant difference between the two approaches, with work experience being almost twice as likely to operate using the one-week block. For work experience students, the next most frequently used mode was the two-week block. This was followed by the mode of one day per week throughout the term. For vocational placement students, the second most frequently used mode was the one day per week followed by the two-week block. These data are presented in table 21.

Other major variations appear in appendix O.

Table 21: Frequencies of modes used for arranging work experience and vocational placement (n=2180)

	1-week block	1-day per week	2-week block
Work experience (n=1954)	90.3	1.0	8.6
Vocational placements (n=226)	47.3	44.2	8.4

Appropriateness of mode

Students were asked to indicate how appropriate the mode used for arranging their work experience/vocational placements had been. The overwhelming majority (86.6%) indicated that the mode employed had either been appropriate or very appropriate. Work experience and vocational placement students tended to reply in a similar way. In fact, 89.9 per cent of work experience students and 83.5 per cent of vocational placement students indicated that the time allocation was appropriate or very appropriate. A very small proportion of work experience students (1.5%) and vocational placement students (3.9%) felt that it had been inappropriate or very inappropriate.

Students who reported that the mode used had been inappropriate were asked to indicate why. Although opinions varied, they mainly related to increasing or decreasing the time spent in the workplace. These details are presented in appendix P.

Teacher study

Teachers were asked to describe the different modes used in their school for work experience and vocational placements. For work experience, the most frequently used mode was the one-week block; for vocational placements, it was the day-release mode (one day per week throughout term etc.). A more comprehensive description of modes used in the study schools appears in table 22.

Less frequently reported modes appear in appendix Q.

The overwhelming majority (87.8%) of teachers reported that these modes were appropriate. Of these, more than half (53.7%) believed that the mode was very appropriate. A similar pattern was found for vocational placements, with 85.7 per cent confirming that the mode was appropriate. Of these, half (50.0%) were of the opinion that the mode was very appropriate.

A small number of teachers believed that the modes were inappropriate. Reasons given for this related to:

- difficulty of supervising large numbers of students
- increasing the time spent in work experience by Year 10 students to better prepare them for work experience in Year 11
- administrative problems of staggering the placements to fit in with subject learning

- problems of having insufficient employers to match student interests
- increasing the exposure of students to the workplace over an extended period of time—say, once per week, to get a real indication of student commitment

Table 22: Modes used for work experience and vocational placements in the study schools

Mode	Work experience (n=38)		Vocational placements (n=25)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
1-week block only	89.5	75.6	44.0	36.7
1-day per week throughout term	13.2	11.1	68.0	56.7
2-week block	15.8	13.3	8.0	6.7
	118.5	**100.0**	**120.0**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

At least 122 different ways of organising time for vocational placements were identified by co-ordinators. The most common mode was the day-release mode; that is, having students attend work for one day at a time either weekly or fortnightly. This was followed by the one-week block. Schools were less likely to schedule the two-week block for placements. Table 23 presents a breakdown of the most frequently used modes for scheduling time in the workplace.

Table 23: Modes for organising vocational placements (n=160)

Mode	Frequency	% of cases	% of responses
Day release (per week, per semester, per year)	148	92.5	37.3
1-week block release (per semester, per year etc.)	117	73.1	29.5
2-week block release (per semester, per year, per term etc.)	23	14.4	5.8
½ day release (per week, per fortnight)	23	14.4	5.8
4 hours per week release	4	2.5	1.0
Others	82	51.3	20.7
	397	**248.2**	**100.0**

Timetabling for flexibility

Co-ordinators were asked whether timetables in schools were made sufficiently flexible to enable students to participate in vocational placements. The most frequent response was that although attempts were made to minimise disruption, students would often miss new work and would have to catch it up. In contrast, the second most frequent response was that vocational placement was programmed into the regular timetable. Other methods used were allowing students to attend placements during non-academic lessons like sports etc. Table 24 presents details on how schools try to accommodate student involvement in vocational placements.

Table 24: Process used by schools to deal with students' absences due to participation in vocational placement (n=149)

Process	No. of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Students miss lessons and are expected to catch up	90	60.4	33.7
Placements are programmed into regular timetable including flexible timetable	63	42.3	23.6
Placements are scheduled during regular timetable to minimise disruption	24	16.1	9.0
Placements are programmed during sport, camp, tutorial sessions etc.	22	14.8	8.2
Placements are programmed at the same time for the same year level	18	12.1	6.7
Placements are scheduled to take place before and after school	10	6.7	3.7
Placements take place on student free days	10	6.7	3.7
Placements take place during school holidays	9	6.0	3.4
Placements are scheduled during regular class times with a 'no new work' policy in place	7	4.7	2.6
Placements are scheduled to take place at the end of the term or after exams have taken place	5	3.4	1.9
Placements are scheduled on a cyclical basis to spread disruptions	3	2.0	1.1
Vocational placement students are on individual timetables	3	2.0	1.1
Vocational placement students drop one regular subject from their studies	3	2.0	1.1
	267	**179.2**	**100.0**

Discussion

Time allocation for experience in the workplace

Both work experience/vocational placement students were generally happy with the way their time in the workplace was scheduled. There were very few students who felt the time was either too long, too short, or should be modified in some way. If dissatisfaction with present systems of scheduling time is low, schools may still need to be concerned with those students who experience frustration with the way that the time is allocated. Schools could develop feedback mechanisms for students to use when they are in difficulties. In this way, teachers may be able to contact employers and discuss reasons for the difficulties, and to see if and how the situation can be improved for the student.

It is also evident from co-ordinators that few schools have implemented flexible timetabling mechanisms to allow students to undertake vocational placements without missing out on other school activities. At times, this means that students have to catch up on work they have missed, or else miss out on fun activities like sport etc. where 'catching up' activities are often not required.

Expecting students who undertake vocational placements to catch up on work that has been missed, or to miss out on fun activities, may deter them from choosing to be involved in vocational programs. Not including time on the normal timetable for vocational placements may also indicate the low priority given by schools to these programs and thus further influence students' willingness to participate.

If students know that they will be expected to do extra work in a vocational course, it may be more difficult for them to show they have interest and willingness to participate in programs and are prepared to meet the demands of the course.

If schools are serious about involving students in vocational education courses, then they must make it easy for students to become involved without expecting them to miss out on other activities. This means ensuring that time for placements is a legitimate item on the timetable.

Preparing for placements

Preparation of students for work experience or vocational placements

Student survey

Students were asked whether or not they had been given a list of things to do prior to going into the workplace. The overwhelming majority of work experience students and just over two-thirds of vocational placement students claimed they had not been given a list of tasks These data are provided in table 25.

Table 25: Student perceptions of being given a list of specific tasks to be done during their work experience/vocational placements

Responsibility	Work experience (n=2020)	Vocational placements (n=232)
Given a list of tasks	19.8	34.5
Not given a list of tasks	80.2	65.6
	100.0	**100.0**

The most frequently prescribed tasks for other students were general duties (assisting, filing, cleaning, photocopying etc.) and tasks relating to the specific occupation the student would be learning about in the workplace. Table 26 presents a detailed account of the types of tasks students were prescribed for the workplace.

Table 26: Tasks prescribed for students prior to attending work experience/vocational placements (n=485)

Tasks	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
General duties (assisting, filing, cleaning, photocopying etc.)	153	31.5	31.1
Specific occupational tasks	117	24.1	23.8
Keeping a journal of activities performed	58	12.0	11.8
Keeping a logbook or work experience booklet	49	10.1	10.0
Completing assignments or projects	28	5.8	5.7
Familiarisation with industry tasks	32	6.6	6.5
Observation tasks	23	4.7	4.7
Organisation specific tasks	18	3.7	3.7
Arranging work experience tasks	14	2.9	2.8
	492	**101.4**	**100.0**

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked whether or not students went into the workplace with a list of tasks to complete. Almost half (45.2%) of the respondents indicated that work experience students went into the workplace with a specific list of things to do. For vocational placements, this figure is almost doubled, with 87.5 per cent of teachers responding that students received a list of things to do in the workplace. These results are different from the student survey findings, with students being less likely to perceive that they had been given such a list.

Teachers also indicated that students were expected to prepare themselves for their time in the workplace. The most common preparation activities expected of students were to contact employers and discuss employer expectations.

Data on the different types of advice given students are presented in table 27.

Table 27: Advice given by teachers to students for activities to prepare themselves for placements in workplaces

Advised activities	Work experience (n=37)		Vocational placements (n=25)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Contact workplace supervisor	100.0	33.0	84.0	21.0
Discuss employer expectations	81.1	26.8	96.0	24.0
Find out about organisations	67.6	22.3	68.0	17.0
Discuss expected outcomes	54.1	17.9	76.0	19.0
Discuss program/requirements	-	-	76.0	19.0
	302.8	**100.0**	**400.0**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Results from the teacher survey are, in part, supported by findings from the co-ordinator survey. Here, almost nine in ten co-ordinators (92.1%) claimed that vocational placement students went into the workplace with a list of skills they were expected to develop.

In addition, students were advised to carry out various activities to prepare themselves for their placements in 96.4 per cent of cases. The most frequently reported activity that students were advised to undertake was to contact the workplace supervisor. This was followed by discussing requirements of the course or program, and discussing expected outcomes. These details are presented in table 28.

Other preparatory activities students were advised to undertake are presented in appendix G.

Table 28: Student preparation for vocational placements (n=160)

Activities	% of cases	% of responses
Contact workplace supervisor	89.4	18.6
Discuss program course requirements	83.8	17.4
Discuss employer expectations	81.9	17.0
Discuss expected outcomes	76.3	15.9
Complete vocational forms	75.6	15.7
Find out about the organisation	73.8	15.3
	480.8	**100.0**

The preparation of supervisors for vocational placements

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to indicate the forms of assistance that workplace supervisors received for providing placements for students. For both work experience and vocational placements, the most common form was assistance with assessment and recording materials, followed by assistance from school staff. A breakdown of these details appears in table 29.

Table 29: Assistance received by supervisors for providing placements

Forms of assistance	Work experience (n=30)		Vocational placements (n=21)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Assessment/recording materials	86.7	60.5	95.2	60.6
Assistance from school staff	53.3	37.2	57.1	36.4
Financial assistance	3.3	2.3	4.8	3.0
	143.3	**100.0**	**157.1**	**100.0**

About one-fifth (19.5%) of the teachers co-ordinating work experience and about one-tenth (9.8%) of those co-ordinating vocational placements reported that workplace supervisors received no assistance.

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators indicated that the most common forms of assistance received by workplace supervisors in their programs were materials to be used for recording and assessment and assistance with assessment practices. Funding was only used in a small number of cases. It was also rare to find co-ordinators reporting that no assistance was provided. Table 30 presents the different forms of assistance provided to workplace supervisors.

Table 30: Assistance for employers/workplace supervisors (n=148)

Forms of assistance	% of cases	% of responses
Assessment and recording material	89.9	55.4
Assistance in assessment practices	66.9	41.3
Financial assistance	5.4	3.3
	162.2	**100.0**

Other forms of assistance for supervisors appear in appendix H.

Advice given to supervisors

Co-ordinators were also asked to specify the advice given to workplace supervisors about the purpose and structure of the program. The most frequently reported type of advice given to supervisors was in the form of materials explaining the aims of the program and responsibilities and requirements. This was followed by explanations of the aims of the program which also included the differences between work experience and vocational placements. The next most frequently reported advice given to workplace supervisors concerned assessment procedures and the completion of logbooks.

Table 31: Advice provided to workplace supervisors by co-ordinators (n=156)

Form of advice	No. of cases	% of cases	Responses %
Provision of materials explaining aims, responsibilities, expectations and processes to be followed (e.g. course descriptions, letters, brochures on workplace learning, learning guides, case studies)	72	46.2	25.6
Explanations on program requirements, assessment procedures and completion of logbooks	70	44.9	24.9
Explanation of aims of programs and roles and responsibilities of participants (e.g. distinguishing features from other work experience programs, individual programs)	60	38.5	21.4
Explanations of outcomes and benefits of program for employers and students	29	18.6	10.3
Provision of support and assistance (as required and throughout the duration of the program)	27	17.3	9.6
Information on program given at orientation evenings	8	5.1	2.8
Information on insurance availability and requirements	6	3.8	2.1
Information on the importance of planning (including answering questions, scheduling time for training, providing support and assistance for students)	4	2.6	1.4
Others	5	3.2	1.8
	281	**180.2**	**100.0**

Table 31 gives a breakdown of details about the types of advice given to workplace supervisors by co-ordinators in this study.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to indicate the type of assistance their organisations received to allow them to provide experiences for students. The great majority (85.0%) replied that they had received no assistance. The remainder reported receiving assistance in the form of:

- Train-the-Trainer program (4.1%)
- learning and assessment materials (3.7%)
- induction program (3.4%)
- extra staff (2.7%)
- financial assistance (1.0%)

One respondent reported that his/her company conducted Train-the-Trainer programs for supervisors and another reported that although Train-the-Trainer programs had been offered, they had not been taken up by supervisors.

Preparation of work experience and vocational placement co-ordinators

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to indicate what form of assistance they received for performing their roles. Assistance from other school staff was the most common form received by teachers for organising work experience. For teachers co-ordinating vocational placements, the most frequently reported form of assistance was training. A breakdown of these details appears in table 32.

Table 32: Assistance received by teachers for organising placements

Forms of assistance	Work experience (n=31)		Vocational placements (n=16)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Assistance from other school staff	87.1	73.0	62.5	27.0
Training	22.6	18.9	68.8	29.7
Industry assistance	6.5	5.4	62.5	27.0
Financial assistance	3.2	2.7	31.3	13.5
	119.4	**100.0**	**225.1**	**100.0**

About a fifth (19.5%) of the teachers co-ordinating work experience and just over a tenth (12.2%) of those co-ordinating vocational placements reported receiving no assistance.

Co-ordinator survey

According to the co-ordinators in this study, the most common form of assistance provided was funding. Although not specified, this funding includes grants for conducting the program and salaries in cases where the co-ordinator is not employed by the school. This is especially relevant for TRAC co-ordinators not based in schools.

This was followed by assistance from other school staff and training.

Table 33 presents information on the different types of assistance received by co-ordinators.

Table 33: Assistance received by vocational placement co-ordinators (n=132)

Forms of assistance	% of cases	% of responses
Funding	78.0	39.7
Assistance from other school staff	53.2	27.1
Training	45.4	23.1
Industry assistance	19.9	10.1
	196.5	**100.0**

From table 33, we can see that more than half of the co-ordinators responding receive assistance from other school staff. Few receive any industry assistance.

Other forms of assistance appear in appendix I.

Training received by students prior to starting work experience and vocational placements

Student survey

The overwhelming majority of students had received some preparation before venturing into the workplace. For vocational placement students, the most frequently reported type of training was in communications. This was followed by training related to working conditions and occupational health and safety. For work experience students, the most frequently reported training was related to working conditions, followed by training related to employer expectations. These details are presented in table 34.

Training received by substantial numbers of students included training in industry-specific skills and knowledge (n=21). Other types of training reported by smaller numbers of students appear in appendix J.

Table 34: Training received by students prior to entering the workplace

Type of training	% of students receiving the training			
	Work experience (n=1599)		Vocational placement (n=194)	
	% of cases	*% of responses*	*% of cases*	*% of responses*
Employer expectations	63.9	19.6	62.4	17.4
Working conditions	63.7	19.5	71.1	19.8
Occupational health and safety	60.6	18.6	70.1	19.5
Communication	52.6	17.1	72.6	20.2
Legal requirements	43.4	13.3	44.3	12.4
Sexual harassment	38.5	11.8	38.1	10.6
	322.7	**100.0**	**358.6**	**100.0**

Most useful training

When students were asked to identify the training found to be most useful during their placement, the single most frequently reported useful training was in communication skills. This was followed by training employer expectations, occupational health and safety and working conditions. This information is more comprehensively presented in table 35.

Table 35: Training found to be most useful by students during their placements (n=1360)

Nature of training	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Communication skills	518	38.1	30.3
Employer expectations	422	31.0	24.7
Occupational health and safety	266	19.6	15.6
Working conditions	240	17.6	14.0
Legal requirements	49	3.6	2.9
Sexual harassment	19	1.4	1.1
Miscellaneous (industry-specific skills, customer service, team skills, subject-matter organisational skills, applying for jobs)	70	5.1	4.1
All training received	126	9.3	7.4
	1710	**125.7**	**100.0**

A small group of students (15.7%) indicated that none of the training they had received had been particularly useful. Of these, a small percentage (10.7%) reported that the training had not been used because none of the areas covered had become an issue.

Teacher survey

The great majority of teachers responsible for co-ordinating work experience (78.0%) and vocational placements (75.0%) indicated that students received training prior to attending placements. For both work experience and vocational placements, the most frequently reported student training was in workplace expectations and requirements of the program.

Details of types of training provided for students in these schools are provided in table 36.

Table 36: Training of students for work experience/vocational placements as reported by teachers

Type of training	Work experience (n=32)			Vocational placement (n=20)		
		% of cases	% of responses		% of cases	% of responses
Formal work-related lessons or modules	(13)	40.6	18.8	(4)	20.0	7.8
Expectations of the workplace and the program (appropriate behaviours, requirements)	(22)	68.8	31.9	(13)	65.0	25.5
Occupational health and safety	(8)	25.0	11.6	(8)	40.0	15.7
Job-seeking skills (interview, letter writing, résumés presentation)	(7)	21.9	10.1	(6)	30.0	11.8
Communication skills (telephone customer service, dealing with difficult situation, letter writing)	(12)	37.5	17.4	(9)	45.0	17.6
Legalities (insurance, harassment, EEO, industrial relations)	(5)	15.6	7.2	(4)	20.0	7.8
Other	(2)	6.3	2.9	(7)	35.0	13.7
	(69)	**215.7**	**100.0**		**255.0**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Most (87.6%) co-ordinators indicated that students in their programs received some training before going out to the workplace. According to co-ordinators, the most frequent type received by students in their programs was training required for the completion of relevant course modules. The second most frequently reported training was in occupational health and safety. A comprehensive breakdown of the type of training received by students in these programs is presented in table 37.

Table 37: Training received by students prior to going to the workplace as reported by co-ordinators (n=152)

Training activities	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Training required for completion of relevant course modules	60	39.5	16.4
Occupational heath and safety	58	38.2	15.9
Skills for the workplace (organisational problem solving, job skills, work practice, confidence, using tools),	37	24.3	10.1
Expectations and course requirements	31	20.4	8.5
Professional behaviour and workplace ethics	24	15.8	6.8
Presentation skills	22	14.5	6.0
Attendance at basic information and induction meetings	21	13.8	5.8
Communication skills (telephone etc.)	21	13.8	5.7
Harassment and equal opportunity	21	13.8	5.7
Roles, rights and responsibilities	16	10.5	4.4
Job-search skills and interview techniques	14	9.2	3.8
Workplace culture or industry awareness	10	6.6	2.7
Confidentiality	8	5.3	2.2
Interpersonal skills	7	4.6	1.9
Completion of assessment records	6	3.9	1.6
Others	9	5.9	2.5
	365	**240.1**	**100.0**

Training received by teachers and vocational placement co-ordinators

Teacher survey

Teachers responsible for courses with vocational placement components were far more likely to have received training for these roles than were teachers responsible for co-ordinating work experience placements.

Career advisors generally attended a formal career advisors' course. Teachers responsible for visiting students on placements were given some short briefing on what to do on these visits. However, only 14.6 per cent of respondents reported this to be the case in their schools. For vocational placements, this figure was 50.0 per cent. Two-thirds of these respondents described the training that these teachers received. Teachers responsible for courses which had a vocational placement component had either received specific inservice training from State accreditation bodies or the ASTF, specific industry training, or had spent time in the workplace.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the type of training they had received for carrying out their roles. Their responses show that almost half (42.9%) of the teachers co-ordinating vocational placements and well over half (58.5%) of those co-ordinating work experience had not received any prior training to prepare them for undertaking this role. The type of training received by those few teachers who had undertaken it appears in table 38.

Table 38: Training received by teachers co-ordinating work experience and vocational placements

Training activities	Work experience (n=14)		Vocational placement (n=12)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
How to liaise with employers	64.3	23.7	73.9	22.4
How to obtain placements	71.4	26.3	73.9	22.4
How to market the program	71.4	26.3	100.0	30.3
How to monitor the quality of the work experience	64.3	23.7	82.6	25.0
	271.4	**100.0**	**330.4**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Well over one-third (40%) of the total group of co-ordinators indicated that they had received no training at all to prepare them for their jobs. The most frequent type of training reported by those who had received it was in how to liaise with employers. This was followed by training in how to obtain vocational placements and how to market the program. A breakdown of the different types of training received by vocational placement co-ordinators is presented in table 39.

Table 39: Training received by vocational placement co-ordinators (n=73)

Training activities	% of cases	% of responses
How to liaise with employers	80.8	27.8
How to obtain vocational placements	75.3	25.9
How to market the program	74.0	25.5
How to monitor the quality of the vocational placement	60.3	20.8
	290.4	**100.0**

At least 23 co-ordinators indicated that their previous experiences and qualifications had also prepared them for their role. Other forms of training reported by co-ordinators appear in appendix K.

Over two-thirds (68%) of co-ordinators who had received training evaluated the effectiveness of this training as successful or very successful.

Training received by workplace supervisors

Teacher survey

Very few respondents reported that supervisors of work experience placements received any specific training for their roles in providing work experience. They were almost three times as likely to report that supervisors of vocational placements had received training prior to having students on placements.

Advice given to supervisors

Teachers were asked to specify the type of advice they gave supervisors regarding the purpose and structure of the placements.

Such advice generally tended to revolve around explaining the purpose of placements, completion of logbooks and expectations of students on industry placements. A very small number (n=5) reported that supervisors either had had specific supervisor or assessor training and had the necessary qualifications to deliver specific industry training.

Co-ordinator survey

Just under half of the co-ordinators in the study indicated that workplace supervisors involved with their programs received some training prior to having students on placements. At least 29 different types of training were identified. The most frequently reported training received by workplace supervisors was supervisor training followed by information about the program. Table 40 presents a comprehensive breakdown of this data.

Table 40: Training received by workplace supervisors prior to having students on vocational placements as reported by co-ordinators (n=99)

Type of training	No. of cases	Responses %
Workplace supervisor training or train the trainer	38	27.5
Information or materials about the program	22	15.9
Attendance at induction and planning sessions	18	13.0
Workplace assessment training (e.g. completion of logbooks and records)	16	11.6
Methods of assessing competencies	15	10.9
Information on student learning	10	7.2
Developing a training program	7	5.1
Information about students	5	3.6
Others	7	5.1
	138	**100.0**

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to describe the training received by those responsible for supervising students before they undertook this role. The great majority replied that these individuals were either adequately experienced supervisors or had the necessary qualifications to be able to do so. Table 41 presents a breakdown of the types of training given to prospective workplace supervisors to prepare them for taking on students.

Table 41: Training received by prospective supervisors of work experience and vocational placement students (n=111)

Type of training	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Already experienced in supervision of others or qualified to do their jobs so did not require specific training	75	67.6	47.2
Briefings, discussions and directions on placements (e.g. objectives of placement or general expectations, outcomes, tasks to be set)	34	30.6	21.4
Provided with information on students (e.g. area of study interests, special needs, educated level)	14	12.6	8.8
Accredited supervisor assessor or train trainer, volunteer training courses(	11	9.9	6.9
Occupational health and safety	8	7.2	5.0
Provided with package of materials describing guidelines for the placement	4	3.6	2.5
Others (e.g. training in leadership/management, preceptor, effective team building, job profile, behaviour problems, job skills, legal requirements, EEO)	13	11.7	8.2
	159	**143.2**	**100.0**

Requests for further training and/or information

Student survey

When students were asked for details of any additional training they would have preferred, the most frequent response was that no additional training was needed. This was followed by requests for industry-specific skills and knowledge training to better prepare students for the particular occupations they had chosen for work experience or vocational placements. More practical experience and prior experience in the workplace were also frequently cited as desired additional training. A breakdown of student preferences appears in table 42.

Table 42: Student requests for additional training (n=1112)

Type of training required	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
No extra training required	633	56.9	54.7
Skills training in chosen area and other occupations	232	20.9	20.1
Practical experience	69	62.1	6.0
All training previously identified	37	3.3	3.2
Communication skills training	19	1.7	1.6
Computer skills training	24	2.2	2.1
Using machinery and equipment	15	1.3	1.3
More information on work experience requirements (e.g. work environment, protocol, occupation, working conditions, transport)	38	3.4	3.3
Customer service training	16	1.4	1.4
Any type of training will help	14	1.3	1.2
TAFE course in particular area	10	0.9	0.9
Miscellaneous (e.g. products, first aid, not sure, shadowing, not necessary for WE, keeping busy when nothing to do, physical training, interview skills, resum writing, legal issues, sign language, self-defence, administration, appearance, confidence)	50	4.5	4.3
	1157	**159.9**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

When co-ordinators were asked to describe the type of additional assistance required to make their programs more effective, their most frequent request was for additional funding. This was indicated by almost three quarters of the group. This was followed by requests for additional staff. Table 43 presents details on the forms of assistance desired by co-ordinators.

Table 43: Forms of assistance desired by vocational placement co-ordinators (n=148)

Forms of assistance	% of cases	% of responses
Additional funding	75.0	39.4
Additional staff	62.8	33.0
Training	52.7	27.7
	190.5	**100.0**

In addition, about 10 per cent of co-ordinators requested extra time to administer the program.

Other desired forms of assistance appear in appendix L.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to indicate the types of training and or information they should receive prior to working with work experience/vocational placements. They most frequently identified information or training related to the objectives of the placement. That is, they wanted to know what the placement was meant to achieve. The second most frequently identified training/information for supervisors of vocational placement students related to occupational health and safety issues. For supervisors of work experience only students, it related to information on any special needs students might have. This was followed by legal requirements Table 44 presents this infonnation for all supervisors and those involved in providing both types of placements and those providing work experience placements only.

Table 44: Training/information required by supervisors prior to working with students

Training/ information	All supervisors (268)		Work experience only (n=200)		Vocational placements (n=68)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Objectives of placement	84.7	21.9	82.0	21.8	92.6	22.1
Any special needs students may have	65.3	16.9	65.5	17.4	64.7	15.4
Occupational health and safety	57.8	15.0	54.0	14.4	69.1	16.5
Legal requirements	55.6	14.4	54.0	14.4	60.3	14.4
Student's educational level	46.6	12.1	45.5	12.1	50.0	11.9
Medical details	41.4	10.7	40.0	10.7	45.6	10.9
Subjects undertaken by student	35.1	9.1	34.5	8.3	36.8	8.8
	386.5	**100.0**	**375.5**	**100.0**	**419.1**	**100.0**

Other training information reported as being required appear in appendix M.

From table 44, we can see that there was only one major difference between the types of information required by organisations providing work experience only and those providing both work experience and vocational placements. This was in the area of occupational health and safety.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to indicate what forms of assistance would help them provide better experiences for students. Almost three quarters favoured receiving a list of objectives that students were expected to achieve. This was followed by a list of skills to be taught to students. Table 45 presents the forms of assistance favoured by supervisors to help them better the experiences students obtained in the workplace.

Table 45: Forms of assistance required by workplace supervisors to provide better placements for students (n=216)

Assistance	All supervisors (n=216)		Work experience only (n=155)		Vocational placements (n=61)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
List of objectives to be achieved by students	77.3	37.3	77.4	39.2	77.0	33.1
List of skills to be taught to students	50.0	24.1	47.1	23.8	57.4	24.6
Financial assistance	36.1	17.4	31.0	15.7	50.8	21.8
Learning and assessment materials	30.0	14.5	30.3	15.4	27.9	12.0
Train-the-Trainer	13.9	6.7	11.6	5.9	19.7	8.5
	207.3	**100.0**	**197.4**	**100.0**	**232.8**	**100.0**

Other forms of assistance required by supervisors to improve work experience/vocational placements appear in appendix N.

Providers of work experience and vocational placements were more likely to require financial assistance than were providers of work experience only.

Discussion

Student preparation

It is evident that a good deal of effort is going into preparing students for their time in the workplace. In the main, the major areas that should be included are adequately covered. However, there are still large numbers of students who report not being given a list of specific tasks to accomplish in the workplace prior to going there. This is also confirmed by a substantial number of employers.

A different picture emerges from the responses of vocational placement co-ordinators. These indicate that vocational placement students for whom they were responsible did, in fact, go into the workplace with a list of skills they were expected to develop.

Discrepancies between the perceptions of students, co-ordinators, and employers about the preparation of students for the workplace may arise. This is because co-ordinators responding to the questionnaire are in many cases not responsible for teaching the courses in which students are prepared for the workplace. It appears that students are claiming they have not been given a list of things to do in the workplace prior to going there. In addition, employers are complaining about the fact that students do not have a definite list of objectives. If this is the case, the issue needs to be addressed.

There needs to be development of a specific list of expectations of what students should do in the workplace prior to the commencement of the work experience/vocational placement. This can help students and employers identify some suitable experiences and skills training. Students will be able to have some input into the list by informing teachers of skills they would like to develop and activities they would like to experience. This information can then help employers decide what tasks are the most appropriate to meet these expectations.

Co-ordinator preparation

Co-ordinators also requested increased funds, extra staff and training to help them better their programs. It is not clear how they expect to use such assistance. However, this information provides ample evidence that co-ordinators need to have regular meetings with funding bodies and educational departments to ensure their suggestions for improvements to the programs be heard.

Additional funds could be used by co-ordinators to run training workshops for supervisors and students prior to their involvement in vocational programs. They can be used to fund the development, production and distribution of training and assessment materials. Extra staff can be used to help in the organisation and administration of the placements once recruitment of employers or students has taken place. This would allow co-ordinators to spend time in counselling students, working with employers and increasing their visits to the workplace while students are undertaking vocational placements.

Training in how to market the programs and recruit and liaise with employers could be an introductory training session for all co-ordinators. Training in how to write assessment materials and monitor the quality of assessments could be done in two phases—introductory and advanced. The introductory phase would be undertaken by all new co-ordinators. It would give them the basic principles of competency-based assessment, the way to explain these principles to supervisors in workplaces and some preliminary practice in writing assessment items. Once co-ordinators had been through the process of monitoring students in the workplace, they would be asked to attend the advanced phase. Here, they would be given opportunities to discuss problems they had experienced, ask for clarification of certain requirements, and be given further practice in writing materials and providing information to employers.

Supervisor preparation

The most important information required by the majority of employers, however, was information on insurance cover. This is very understandable. Employers do not want to find that they are liable for any accident likely to happen to students in the workplace. For this reason, it is important for schools to make sure students and teachers have adequate information about insurance cover that can be given to employers on requesting placements.

It is also very evident from employers that in preparing for placements they would like to receive information on a number of matters. These include legal issues, the student's background and what they are expected to do with students when they arrive in the workplace.

Employers also want to receive information about students and any special needs they may have. They want to have details on any special medical problems that might be exacerbated by students being put into hazardous environments.

Employers want to have specific information about what students are expected to do in the workplace. Although this information is important for employers who are overseeing work experience students, it is even more relevant for employers who are responsible for vocational placement students. Materials which set out clear objectives of the placement and give a brief profile of the student may allow employers to prepare better for the placement. Information on the educational status of the students will help them to have appropriate expectations. Information on the subjects that are being studied by vocational placement students may help them assist students to make the links between practice and theory. Although requests for information on what it would cost the company were made by few employers, it would make sense for schools to give a breakdown of financial costs in terms of time and resources.

It is interesting that some employers are also requesting financial assistance, especially in the case of vocational placements. This may help them to pay management fee costs to special programs (TRAC, E-team) or to help them reduce the costs of having workers diverted from production outcomes to take care of students. Although schools are in no position to do much about these costs, this may be an important issue to consider in the distribution of federal funds.

Training students for work experience

The most useful training for students in this study was in communication skills, employer expectations and occupational health and safety. Training on sexual harassment issues was less frequently covered and was rarely identified as having been useful or requested as additional training. Such training should be included in any preparatory course for students venturing into the workplace. However, it is also evident that this group of students in the workplace have not had to deal with situations in which such problems have become an issue. Such information can be reassuring both to schools and parents.

Students provided few requests for any additional training. This may either be a reflection of student satisfaction with the amount of training they had already received or it may be an indication that they do not want to do any extra work. Where students did identify needs for additional training, these generally dealt with requests for more specific skills training to help them better perform tasks in the workplace.

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It would make sense for teachers to give students practice in specific skills before they enter the workplace. However, it is important that these skills are taught in ways that will not interfere with what students learn in the workplace. It is for this reason that teachers responsible for preparing students for vocational placements should be aware of the type of equipment and machinery used in the workplace and the modern standard ways of performing tasks.

One way for teachers to become better informed about what is done in the workplace is for them to visit it prior to the student commencing work experience/vocational placement. Teachers can then discuss with supervisors whether or not students will benefit from practising the skills at school prior to coming to the workplace. At this time, effective strategies for providing this practical experience can also be discussed.

Training supervisors

Generally, workplace supervisors in this study were rarely given specific training to prepare them for their roles. Nor did they request this training to any great extent. This may be because they believe they already have these skills and can undertake supervision of students. This would occur after having been provided with basic guidelines on what is expected of them, legal specifications and details of students they will be working with.

It is important for substantial numbers of supervisors to have a supply of materials to be used for assessment or learning provided by the schools. These requirements seem to be of low financial and labour cost to schools and can help employers provide better learning experiences for students.

Co-ordinators were asked what training was received by supervisors to prepare them for participation in vocational placement programs. Only a small percentage reported that employers were given training in assessing student competencies. In addition, there were few supervisor requests for assistance or training in conducting student assessments. This is very surprising, in that one of the most important roles supervisors will perform in overseeing vocational placements is assessing whether or not a student has acquired a skill to a competent level. One reason for this may be that supervisors are expected to know whether or not the student is able to perform a task to a competent level. Another reason may be that explanations about how to undertake these activities are covered in meetings with employers and in materials sent to employers.

Training co-ordinators

Almost half the vocational placement co-ordinators in this study have not received any training to carry out their roles. Where training has occurred, it has been in the area of getting employers to accept the programs and to become participants in them. However, the effectiveness of any program can only be evaluated if there are adequate monitoring mechanisms in place. Very few co-ordinators reported receiving training in this area. These findings suggest that these skills are either assumed to be possessed by co-ordinators, and therefore no training is required, or have not been given the importance they deserve.

Choosing occupations

Industry areas

Students were asked to indicate which occupation they were hoping to learn about during their work experience or vocational placements. A total of 316 occupations in 34 different groupings were identified. By far the most favoured set of occupations were in the health and community services sector. The next most favoured occupations were in education and childcare.

Table 46 presents a breakdown of the occupational areas students indicated they were hoping to learn about during their work experience/vocational placements.

In addition, just under one-tenth (8.6%) of the total group of students indicated they were unsure, did not wish to learn about any particular occupation or failed to provide a response. The remainder (1.6%) indicated they wished to improve interpersonal skills, increase knowledge of an industry or area, fulfill course requirements and increase their experience with machinery and the world of work.

Table 46: Occupational areas of interest to students (n=2053)

Occupational groupings	No. of students	% of students
Health and community services	243	11.8
Education	171	8.3
Hospitality	164	8.0
Childcare	112	5.5
Animal health	89	4.3
Automotive	84	4.1
Law	81	3.9
Retail	80	3.9
Tourism, sport and recreation	79	3.8
Engineering	72	3.5
Science	63	3.1
Management, property, commerce	57	2.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	56	2.7
Building and construction	53	2.6
Clerical/secretarial	52	2.5
Computing/technology	52	2.5
Media	49	2.4
Design/illustration/decoration	49	2.4
Architecture, town planning, surveying, drafting	48	2.3
Hair and beauty	47	2.3
Accounting/bookkeeping	46	2.3
Entertainment	45	2.2
Marketing and public relations	38	1.9
Police, security and emergency services	38	1.9
Electrical/electronics	33	1.6
Miscellaneous	29	1.4
Aviation	26	1.3
Banking and finance	22	1.1
Horticulture/landscaping/greenkeeping	20	1.0
Photography	20	1.0
Military	10	0.5
Public administration	10	0.5
Floristry	9	0.4
Printing/publishing	6	0.3
	2053	**100.0**

Favoured occupations

The most frequently chosen occupation was teacher, followed by childcare worker. Lawyers, solicitors and barristers formed the next largest group. The 15 most frequently identified single occupations regardless of industry area are presented in table 47.

The great majority of students (85.9%) reporting an occupation of interest did not choose the trades. The trades that do attract the most interest from students, however, are chefs, mechanics, hairdressers, electricians and carpenters and joiners. Table 48 presents a rank ordering of the trades that students have reported wanting to learn more about during their work experience/vocational placements.

Table 47: The most favoured occupations

Area	No. of students	% of students
Teacher (primary, music, art, PE, early childhood, sp.ed, drama)	171	8.3
Childcare worker	111	5.4
Lawyer/solicitor/barrister	75	3.7
Chef/cook	61	3.0
Mechanic	57	2.8
Veterinary surgeon	58	2.8
Medical practitioner (doctors)	46	2.2
Accountant	45	2.2
Journalist	42	2.0
Physiotherapist and occupational therapist	40	1.9
Hairdresser	38	1.9
Nurse	38	1.9
Police officer	32	1.6
Architect	31	1.5

Table 48: Trades chosen by students in work experience/vocational placements (n=290)

Area	No. of students	Rank order
Chef	61	1
Mechanic	57	2
Hairdresser	38	3
Electrician	25	4
Carpenter and joiner	21	5
Panel beater/spray painter	9	6
Florist	9	6
Fitter and turner	9	6
Boilermaker	8	9
Diesel fitter	8	9
Green keeper	8	9
Plumber	6	12
Signwriter	5	13
Baker	5	13
Auto electrician	4	15
Welder	4	15
Furniture builder	3	17
Upholsterer	2	18
Boat builder	2	18
Roofer	1	20
Tiler	1	20
Instrument fitter	1	20
Printer	1	20
Aircraft mechanic	2	24
	290	

Plans for the future

When students were asked whether or not they were planning to follow the occupations they had experienced during work experience/vocational placements as a career path, responses were received from 90 per cent of students. Of these, over half (55.7%) of the students in work experience placements and a similar proportion (58.4%) of vocational placement students indicated that they were planning to do so.

Discussion

The occupations that interest students

For some time, there has been a concentrated effort to increase vocational education in schools in the hope of encouraging more students into the traditional vocations as well as into the emerging or growth industries. This study shows that students hold different aspirations. Students in this study were interested in a large variety of occupations and industries. However, few of them indicated an interest in occupations which have been traditionally tied to trades and only a small percentage identified interests in growth or emerging industries such as hospitality or technology.

One reason for not choosing the trades may be that students are more likely to identify with the professions they frequently encounter or understand. Another reason may be that students may choose those occupations presented as glamorous or exciting. If this is true, then it may make good sense for industry and trade associations which have a need for trained workers to market themselves in such a way that students receive up-to-date information about what the trades can offer.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that students may be choosing not to go into the trades because they perceive that the life-time earning capacities of professionals are greater. Students may also be well aware of the difficulties faced by tradespeople of finding jobs in the domestic sector of the construction industry.

If the aims of the training reforms are to channel students into vocations including the trades and new, emerging industries, and the aspirations of students are not in these areas, then this poses a dilemma for the implementation of these reforms. It does not make sense for governments to fund schemes to produce skilled workers for industries which do not need them. However, it is important for them to promote the value of a trade qualification to students and their parents. This means making students, parents and teachers aware that successful tradespeople are not the drop-outs of the academic system but those who have highly developed practical skills, diagnostic abilities and technical expertise. The trades should be presented as occupations with promise and not just for students who are not good at school work. Furthermore, if governments are serious about attracting students into trades that are required to increase competitiveness in international markets, then they may also need to consider how they can increase the earning capacities of tradespeople.

In theory, students would be well advised to follow those occupations which genuinely inspire them. They are more likely to be motivated to do well and, as a result, will derive much more job satisfaction. In practice, however, it may be irresponsible for school systems not to provide accurate information to students of any existing over-supply of workers in these areas.

It is important to keep in mind that well over half of both the work experience group and the vocational placement group are intending to continue in the careers they sought to learn about during their work experience/vocational placements. Developing aspirations for vocations in the professions or the trades is especially crucial at this stage of students' development. If work experience and vocational placements can provide extra information and experience which will help nurture these aspirations, then it will have played a major part in preparing students for the workforce.

In contrast, minimal numbers of students who were already in part-time jobs were considering pursuing these as careers in the future. Part-time jobs may, indeed, provide students with organisational skills and experience in the paid workforce. They may not, however, give students any insight into their chosen careers. It is here that work experience and vocational placements are filling the gap.

Supervising, monitoring and assessing workplace performance

Responsibility for workplace training

Student survey

Students reported that they learnt most of their skills from other workers rather than any other single group in the workplace. This was so for both work experience students and vocational placement students. Supervisors were identified as the next most likely group to be responsible for imparting skills to students. These were followed by managers. Other students were rarely selected as having responsibility for teaching skills in the workplace. A substantial number of students indicated that they themselves were also responsible for their own learning.

Table 49 gives a more comprehensive picture of these data.

Table 49: Responsibility for teaching workplace skills

Responsibility	**Work experience (n=1933)**		**Vocational placements (n=219)**	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Other workers	70.9	39.5	66.0	35.5
Supervisors	53.1	29.6	61.6	33.3
Managers	31.2	17.4	26.9	14.5
Self	20.1	11.2	26.0	14.1
Other students	4.0	2.2	4.6	2.5
	179.3	**100.0**	**185.1**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to report the ways in which workplace supervisors were expected to assist students in developing their skills. The most frequent assistance supervisors were expected to provide included appropriate training activities and adequate time to provide training. This was closely followed by demonstrating to students the correct procedures for performing tasks and correcting student techniques when these were faulty. This was also closely followed by the provision of enough opportunities for students to access real work and develop their practical skills. Table 50 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the activities supervisors are expected to perform to assist students to develop their skills.

Table 50: How supervisors are expected to assist skill development in students (n=153)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Provision of appropriate training activities (e.g. appropriate tasks, adequate time to provide training)	47	30.7	13.7
Demonstration of correct procedures to students (e.g. safe procedures, correction of student techniques)	46	30.1	13.5
Provision of adequate practical tests (e.g. authentic activities, real-work tasks, opportunities to develop practical skills)	44	28.8	12.9
Provision of ample opportunities for students to practice and repeat skills learned	36	23.5	10.5
Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision of students	34	22.2	9.9
Provision of feedback and explanations to students (e.g. answering student questions, explaining reasons for activities)	32	20.9	9.4
Training the student as they would train a new employee or apprentice	27	17.6	8.0
Provision of structured training (e.g. following the specific learning outcomes as outlined in logbooks)	24	15.7	7.0
Acting as mentor for students (e.g. providing advice, guidance and encouragement)	23	15.0	6.7
Modelling the skills and behaviours for students	8	5.2	2.3
Formally checking off logbooks	7	4.6	2.0
Provision of one-to-one training	5	3.3	1.5
Others	9	5.9	2.6
	342	**224.8**	**100.0**

Supervisor survey

The majority of respondents allocated the responsibility for supervising students to workplace supervisors. Table 51 shows that there are minimal differences between organisations who provided work experience only and those who provided both work experience and vocational placements.

Respondents also identified other personnel as also being responsible for supervising students in the workplace. These included:

- other workers in the specific area where the student is located (n=15)
- chief officers or managers of sections or departments (n=16)
- professionals and senior tradespeople working with students (n=42)

Table 51: Responsibility for supervising students in the workplace

Responsibility	All supervisors (n=247)		Work experience only (n=180)		Vocational placements (n=67)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Supervisors	72.1	47.7	72.2	47.6	71.6	48.0
Managers	51.4	34.0	52.2	34.4	49.2	33.0
Leading hands	27.5	18.2	27.2	17.9	28.4	19.0
	151.0	**100.0**	**151.6**	**100.0**	**149.2**	**100.0**

Specification of skills to be learnt by students

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked who was responsible for specifying the tasks students were expected to perform in the workplace. The most frequent response for vocational placements was that tasks were specified by the curriculum; for work experience, the responsibility was almost evenly divided between workplace co-ordinators and employers. These data are provided in table 52.

Table 52: Specification of skills to be learnt in the workplace

Responsibility	Work experience (n=36)		Vocational placements (n=25)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Specified by workplace co-ordinator	41.7	32.6	24.0	13.0
Specified by employer/ supervisor	38.9	30.4	32.0	17.4
Specified by both workplace co-ordinator and supervisors	30.6	23.9	48.0	26.1
Specified by the curriculum	16.7	13.0	80.0	43.5
	127.9	**100.0**	**184.0**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to indicate who was responsible for specifying the skills to be developed by students in the workplace. The most frequent response was that these skills were specified by the curriculum. This was followed by the teacher being responsible for specifying skills. Supervisors/employers were the least likely to have responsibility for specifying the skills to be learnt in the workplace. These data are provided in table 53.

Table 53: Specification of skills to be learnt in the workplace (n=155)

Responsibility	% of cases	% of responses
Specified by the curriculum	85.2	41.1
Specified by the teacher	47.7	23.1
Specified by program co-ordinator	40.0	19.3
Specified by employer/supervisor	32.9	15.9
Not known	3.6	0.6
	209.4	**100.0**

Other methods for specifying skills to be learnt in the workplace appear in appendix R.

Recording and reporting on student performance

Student survey

The supervisor's report was the most frequently used method for recording or reporting on student performance in the workplace for work experience students. This was used in almost three-quarters (74.4%) of cases. What is also interesting is that over a third of the work experience students claim also to be using logbooks.

For vocational placement students, the logbook was the most frequent form of recording. Table 54 gives a breakdown of the different methods used for recording student performance and the frequency with which they had been used.

Table 54: Methods for recording student performance

Assessors	Number of cases			
	Work experience (n=1847)		Vocational placements (n=217)	
	% of cases	*% of responses*	*% of cases*	*% of responses*
Supervisor's written report	74.4	51.6	52.1	32.7
Student logbook	40.5	28.1	62.6	39.3
Supervisor completed check-list	29.2	20.3	44.7	28.0
	144.1	**100.0**	**159.4**	**100.0**

Other methods of assessment reported by small numbers of students appear in appendix S.

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to identify the methods for recording student performance in the workplace. The most frequently used method for recording work experience performance was the supervisor report followed by the student logbook. For vocational placements, it was the student logbook followed by the supervisor report. These data are presented in table 55.

Table 55: Methods for recording student performance in the workplace

Method	Work experience (n=37)		Vocational placements (n=24)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Supervisor's report	83.8	40.8	66.7	30.8
Student logbook	73.0	35.5	83.3	38.5
Supervisor checklist	48.6	23.7	66.7	30.8
	205.4	**100.0**	**216.7**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to indicate the method used for recording student performance in the workplace. The most frequently identified recording method was checking off logbooks by accredited workplace assessors. This was followed by students keeping a journal of activities. It was rare for performance not to be recorded in some way. Table 56 provides a breakdown of these data.

Table 56: Methods for recording student performance in the workplace (n=160)

Method	% of cases	% of responses
Accredited assessor checks off logbook	73.1	33.0
Student keeps a journal of activities	67.5	30.4
Supervisor fills in a checklist of activities student must complete	45.6	20.6
Supervisor writes a report on what students have done	35.6	16.1
	221.8	**100.0**

Other methods for recording performance appear in appendix T.

Supervisor survey

Almost a third (30.8%) of the respondents indicated that a checklist was used to record student activities in the workplace. Well over half (58%) of these rated the checklist as a 'good' to 'excellent' method for recording student's workplace activities. Almost all of the remainder indicated that they found this form of recording adequate. Only one person gave the checklist a 'poor' rating.

Just over a quarter (27.1%) of respondents indicated that a journal or diary was used as a method for recording student activities. Almost three quarters (72.2%) of these rated this form of recording as 'good' to 'excellent', with the remainder rating it as adequate. There were no 'poor' ratings given.

A smaller percentage (20.9%) of respondents indicated that a logbook was used to record student activities. Of these, over half (55.7%) gave the logbook a 'good' to 'excellent' rating, with all but two (7.4%) of the remainder giving the logbook an 'adequate' rating.

No records maintained

About a third of the supervisors (31.8%) indicated that they did not record student activities. Of these, about a tenth (9.7%) felt there was no need to do so. In addition, a very small number (n=5) indicated that they relied on verbal reports. Three of these respondents also believed that there was no need to formally record what students did in the workplace. These findings show that supervisors were generally satisfied with the recording methods they had been using.

Suggestions for improving records

However, when supervisors were asked what could be done to improve the methods for recording student performance in the workplace, they had a number of suggestions. The most common response was to implement formal recording systems including logbooks, checklists, diaries or reports or improve the ways in which these were used. Table 57 sets out various methods identified by supervisors to better record student performance.

Table 57: Improvements to present systems of keeping track of student performance in the workplace as specified by supervisors (n=121)

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Implement or modify logbooks, checklists and plans of activities:	72	59.5	47.7
Implement a log book or checklist system (44)			
Track student daily performance through the daily completion and monitoring of the logbook (10)			
Modify the layout of logbooks to include blank spaces for duties and an effectiveness rating (1)			
Make students responsible for keeping their own logbooks (4)			
Provide employers with more information to explain procedures to be followed in logbook (1)			
Keep logbooks simple and straightforward (2)			
Provide a plan of activities and expected outcomes that can be checked off when they are achieved (5)			
Have a co-ordinated approach to setting out objectives in logbooks (1)			
Have supervisors responsible for checking records (2)			
Include section in logbooks for general comments which is to be completed at the conclusion of the placement (1)			
Have more specific and detailed records in addition to diaries (1)			
Define and clarify goals and objectives of placement for workplace supervisors:	20	16.5	13.3
Students to give supervisors a list or details of goals and objectives of the placement (15)			
Objectives should be forwarded to the workplace prior to the commencement of work experience/vocational placement (5)			

Activity	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Improve student record-keeping methods:	17	14.0	11.3
Implement a journal or diary system of recording (8)			
Have student journals assessed at the workplace (1)			
Implement a diary and/or evaluation sheet recording system (3)			
Students record own activities, supervisors to check these records (3)			
Students report activities and what is learnt, and return to employers (1)			
Students to be responsible for recording own activities in addition to supervisors completing checklists (1)			
Implement standardised record-keeping systems:	17	14.0	11.3
Implement standardised organised checklists for all schools to use (6)			
Implement a recording which is organisation/industry specific (10)			
Include space on checklist for supervisor/student comments (1)			
Increase schools' responsibility:	13	10.7	8.6
Assessment of skills should be done at schools (1)			
Teachers should pay visits to workplace (2)			
Schools should take responsibility for better matching student to workplace (2)			
Schools to supply proforma for record keeping (7)			
Teachers to supervise students in the workplace (1)			
Others:	12	9.9	7.9
Introduce three-way assessments—school, workplace, student			
Keep to observation of activities			
Difficult to assess after short period of time students are in workplace			
Provide extra staff and finance			
Introduce three-way interviews between schools, student and workplace supervisors			
	151	**124.6**	**100.0**

Liaison between schools and workplaces

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to indicate how they liaised with supervisors in the workplace. For work experience placements, the most frequently reported teacher liaison activity was the telephone conversation. This was used whenever it was felt to be necessary. The second most frequently reported discussion activity was written feedback from the supervisor either during or after the placement. A similar pattern was evident for vocational placements. These data are presented in table 58.

Table 58: Methods used by teachers for liaising with workplace supervisors

Method	Work experience (n=40)		Vocational placements (n=23)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Telephone conversation when necessary	100.0	43.0	100.0	30.3
Written feedback from supervisor	62.5	26.9	82.6	25.0
Regular meetings during placement	50.0	21.5	73.9	22.4
Meeting(s) before placement	20.0	8.6	73.9	22.4
	232.5	**100.0**	**330.4**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to indicate how they liaised with workplace supervisors. The most frequent method of liaison was the telephone conversation. Meetings before and during the placement were also highly favoured. Details on the methods used for liaising with supervisors appear in table 59.

Table 59: Methods used by co-ordinators for liaising with workplace supervisors (n=165)

Method	% of cases	% of responses
Telephone conversations where necessary	93.3	29.4
Meetings before placement	83.0	26.2
Regular meetings during placement	81.2	25.6
Written feedback from supervisor via student during placement	59.4	18.7
	316.9	**100.0**

Additional methods for liaising with workplace supervisors appear in appendix U.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to describe how work experience/vocational placements were co-ordinated between the school and the workplace. They identified at least 96 different ways in which the co-ordination of placements took place. In the great majority of cases, the initiative was taken by co-ordinators or students. Table 60 provides a breakdown of various ways in which schools and workplaces liaise activities for work experience/vocational placements.

Table 60: Co-ordination of work experience/vocational placements (n=265)

	No.	% of cases	Percentage
Direct approach by student	71	26.8	16.1
Telephone conversation	57	21.5	13.0
Co-ordinator liaises with company	51	19.2	11.6
School co-ordinates	48	18.1	10.9
School/co-ordinator makes initial contact	38	14.3	8.6
Letter/fax	35	13.2	8.0
Signing of work experience forms	26	9.8	5.9
Letter of request from teacher or student	20	7.5	4.5
Organised through HR dept/staff members	13	4.9	3.0
Schools confirm and provide details	13	4.9	3.0
Students send follow-up letter/forms	12	4.5	2.7
Students arrange everything	8	3.0	1.8
Co-ordinator visits during placement	8	3.0	1.8
Confirmation of placement with schools	8	3.0	1.8
Interviews	8	3.0	1.8
Parents contact company	6	2.3	1.4
Long-standing relationship with school	3	1.1	0.7
Organised through central agency	2	.8	0.5
Others	13	4.9	3.0
	440	**165.8**	**100.0**

Assessment of student performance

Student survey

The great majority of work experience students (87.4%) and vocational placement students (84.9%) had been given an assessment of their performance. A small percentage (12.2%) of work experience students and a slightly larger percentage of vocational placement students (14.5%) reported that they had not been given an assessment of their performance.

Location of assessments

Assessments for both work experience and vocational placement students were most frequently conducted at the workplace. This was confirmed by the great majority of work experience students and vocational placement students. Only a small percentage of work experience and vocational placement students indicated that their assessment took place at school. A slightly larger proportion indicated that their assessments had taken place at school and in the workplace. At least two students indicated that their assessments had taken place at TAFE. These details are presented in table 61.

Table 61: Location of work experience/vocational placement assessments

	Work experience (n=1924)	Vocational placements (n=221)
Workplace	86.4	76.0
Both school and in workplace	11.6	20.5
School	1.9	3.1
TAFE	–	0.9
	100.0	**100.0**

Responsibility for assessment

For work experience and vocational placement students, these assessments had been provided, in the main, by supervisors. However, a greater proportion of the vocational placement students were more likely to have also been assessed by senior workers, managers and teachers. These data are presented in table 62.

Table 62: Assessors of student performance

Assessors	**Number of cases**			
	Work experience (n=1850)		Vocational placements (n=214)	
	% of cases	*% of responses*	*% of cases*	*% of responses*
Supervisors	63.7	49.4	66.3	47.8
Managers	33.6	26.1	29.9	21.5
Senior workers	16.0	12.4	14.5	10.4
Teachers from school	15.2	11.8	24.8	17.8
TAFE teachers	0.4	0.3	3.8	2.3
	128.9	**100.0**	**139.3**	**100.0**

Other frequently reported assessors included owners or chief executive officers of the company or organisation in which the student performed the placement (n=41) or the professional with whom the student was working (n=27). In addition, there were other workers in the department (n=19), non-commissioned officers and officers in defence forces (n=7).

It is evident from table 62 that teachers from school are more likely to assess student performance in vocational placements than they are in work experience.

Teacher survey

The most frequent assessor of student performance for work experience and vocational placements was the supervisor, followed by the teacher. These data are presented in table 63

Table 63: Assessors of student workplace performance as specified by teachers

Assessor	Work experience (n=36)		Vocational placements (n=24)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Workplace supervisor	91.7	56.9	87.5	53.8
Teacher from school	52.8	32.8	45.8	28.2
TAFE teacher	-		8.3	5.1
Other	16.7	10.7	20.8	12.8
	161.2	**100.0**	**162.4**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators reported that the most frequently reported assessor of student performance was the workplace supervisor. This was followed by the teacher from school, and then the co-ordinator. Teachers from TAFE colleges were rarely involved. A breakdown of these data appear in table 64.

Table 64: Assessors of student workplace performance as reported by co-ordinators (n=166)

Assessor	% of cases	% of responses
Workplace supervisor	93.4	51.3
Teacher from school	53.6	29.5
Co-ordinator	29.5	16.2
TAFE teacher	5.4	2.9
	181.9	**100.0**

Location of assessment

The most frequently identified locations for the assessment of workplace learning were both in the workplace and the classroom. This was confirmed by 68.9 per cent of co-ordinators. Only a few identified the workplace (24.1%) or the classroom (6.1%) as the sole location for assessment.

Follow-up activities

Student survey

Both work experience and vocational placement students were involved in a number of different follow-up activities at the conclusion of their work experience/vocational placement. By far the most popular activity was the written report, where students described their experience in the workplace. Also popular was answering questions about their experience and discussing the skills they had learnt with their classmates. Giving a presentation was only used in a small number of cases. A small percentage (4.9%) of the total group of students reported that they were not involved in any follow-up activities. In addition, 1.3 per cent of students mentioned completing the questionnaire for this study as one of or the sole follow-up activity with which they had been involved.

Table 65 provides a breakdown of involvement in school follow-up activities.

Table 65: Follow-up activities reported by students

Activity	Work experience (n=1595)		Vocational placements (n=195)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Wrote report on experiences	74.6	39.3	69.2	37.0
Answered questions	54.1	28.6	38.5	20.5
Discussed skills learnt at work	42.4	22.4	57.4	30.7
Gave presentation on experience	18.4	9.7	22.1	11.8
	189.5	**100.0**	**187.2**	**100.0**

Other activities mentioned by a minority of students appear in appendix V.

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to indicate the follow-up activities in which students at their schools were involved. For work experience placements, the most frequently identified follow-up activity was the student report, followed by the class discussion. For vocational placements, it was the class discussion of skills learnt in the workplace followed by the student report. These data are presented in table 66.

Table 66: Follow-up activities used for work experience and vocational placements as specified by teachers

Activity	Work experience (n=33)		Vocational placements (n=24)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Student written report	90.9	45.5	75.0	35.3
Class discussion	72.7	36.4	87.5	41.2
Student presentation	36.4	18.2	50.0	23.5
	200.0	**100.0**	**212.5**	**100.0**

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to indicate the types of follow-up activities that students were involved with after their vocational placements. The most frequently used follow-up activity was the informal discussion of skills learnt. This was followed by a written report. (It was rare to find that no follow-up activities were required.)

Table 67 presents the types of follow-up activities used by co-ordinators in this study.

Table 67: Follow-up activities used by vocational placement students as specified by co-ordinators (n=158)

Activity	% of cases	% of responses
Students		
Informally discuss skills learnt at work	92.4	41.1
Write a report on experiences	68.4	30.4
Give oral presentations of their experience	63.9	28.5
	224.7	**100.0**

Other follow-up activities reported by co-ordinators appear in appendix W.

Program evaluation

Co-ordinator survey

Almost three-quarters (70.5%) of the co-ordinators in this study indicated that they had processes in place for the evaluation of their programs. The most frequently reported processes for program evaluation were based on discussion and feedback from employers. The second most frequently reported process was based on student evaluation forms.

Table 68: Evaluation processes used by co-ordinators (n=127)

Processes	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Discussion and feedback from employers	44	34.6	18.8
Student surveys and evaluation forms	39	30.7	16.7
Employer surveys and evaluation forms	29	22.8	12.4
Teacher surveys and evaluation forms	21	16.5	9.0
Management and internal review committee discussions and reports	21	16.5	9.0
Student feedback through discussions, journals etc.	14	11.0	6.0
Meetings and interviews with teachers and students	11	8.7	4.7
Discussions with employers, student, parents and teachers	10	7.9	4.3
Formal evaluation reports prepared for funding bodies	9	7.1	3.8
Destination studies	9	7.1	3.8
Evaluation of student reports and logbooks	7	5.5	3.0
Parent feedback through discussions and surveys	6	4.7	2.6
Industry feedback	4	3.1	1.7
Others	10	7.9	4.3
	234	**184.1**	**100.0**

Table 68 provides details on the types of processes co-ordinators used to evaluate their programs.

Other activities used for evaluating programs appear in appendix X.

Discussion

Involving other workers in pre-planning

This study shows that other workers and supervisors are far more likely to be involved in the training of students than any other group. There is considerable understanding of the need for supervisors to be appropriately trained to take up their training and assessment roles. However, it seems that there needs to be more information shared with workers who will also be responsible for training students. This may mean that they, too, should be asked to attend information sessions conducted by the workplace or the school. Clarifying for these workers what students will be expected to do can also help ensure that students' experiences in the workplace are worthwhile. Providing training opportunities for these workers to help improve the way they train and assess students can assist in their own career development. In addition, it can make them feel that they have an integral and valued part to play in the skilling of young people for industry.

Information from supervisors also confirms the positive attitudes of other workers towards students. Involving these workers in planning tasks for students to perform will also help ensure that they continue to be positive about working with students.

More workplace visits from teachers and co-ordinators

A substantial number of students would like more workplace visits from teachers and co-ordinators. Apart from making sure that students are not having a traumatic time in the workplace, teachers can use these workplace visits to better liaise with employers and check up on exactly what the students are doing. It may be difficult for one specialist careers teacher to make adequate visits to each student on work experience or vocational placements. However, schools which have all year levels out on work experience at the same time may consider involving year-level co-ordinators and teachers to assist career teachers in this exercise. If schools were to use such a system, then it would be important to run information and training sessions for these teachers.

Involving all teachers in the monitoring exercise may benefit students in two ways. It may signal to students the importance the school attaches to developing workplace skills, and strengthen the type of training that students receive in the workplace.

Follow-up activities which add value

When work experience and vocational placement students return to school after completing their time in the workplace, they are likely to be involved in some form of follow-up activity. Follow-up activities are worthwhile: they give students an opportunity to share their experiences with teachers and other students. They also allow teachers to gather valuable feedback as to the suitability of certain workplaces for further programs. They ensure that the experience in the workplace is not an isolated part of the school curriculum.

Although there is nothing to suggest that students want these features of their programs to be changed in any major way, it seems that having students produce major reports asking them to reflect on their experience may not be the best use of their time. It may be more beneficial for teachers to provide students with opportunities to discuss their experiences with their peers. They can reflect on what went well and look at ways of improving on less positive aspects of their experience. Turning a practical experience into a purely academic exercise may, in fact, not be the best way of getting students to reflect on what has happened.

Assessing and reporting on student performance

The major assessors of student performance in the workplace were supervisors. This was the case for both work experience and vocational placement students. However, senior workers and teachers from school were also involved in providing assessments. What is unclear is the extent to which teachers are involved in these assessments. It makes little sense for teachers to look at the same practical skills that are being assessed in the workplace. It would be more productive for them to concentrate on providing effective assessment guidelines for supervisors or developing straightforward assessment materials for them to use.

One way to determine the assessment roles of supervisors and teachers is for the two groups to meet and clarify what will be assessed in the workplace and what will be assessed in the classroom.

Program evaluation

It seems that the great majority of co-ordinators responsible for programs in this study are especially aware of the need for evaluation. Program evaluation coupled with adequate monitoring of placements can provide co-ordinators and employers with suggestions for program improvement and information for policy development.

Analysing expectations and outcomes

What students gain from work experience and vocational placement

Student survey

Students were asked to think about what they had hoped to gain from the workplace experience and to indicate the extent to which these expectations were met. The great majority of students expected the experience to provide them with more information about specific jobs and the skills required to do them. They wanted opportunities to work with others and experience responsibility. Fewer students wanted their time in the workplace to help them make decisions about subjects to take, courses to pursue at university or the types of apprenticeships or traineeships to undertake. Table 69 shows the number and percentage of students who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements provided. The percentage of students column is based on the total number of students in the study.

Table 69: Student expectations of work experience/vocational placement

Expectations	**Students**	
Work experience/vocational placement will help me to:	No. of students	% of all students
Understand the work environment	2086	91.3
Find out if its the job I really want	2027	88.7
Find out what sort of skills are required for the job	1997	87.4
Work with others	1801	78.8
Experience responsibilitytrewa	1746	76.4
Become better informed about what career choices are available	1737	76.0
Better understand my employment potential	1678	73.4
Increase confidence in my ability	1616	70.7
Understand the number of different jobs available	1496	65.5
Decide which course to do at university/TAFE	1303	57.0
Decide which subject to do next year	1004	43.9
Decide which apprenticeship/traineeship to do in the future	998	43.7

The students' ratings of each expectation and the extent to which these had been fulfilled were compared. There were significantly high and positive relationships between what students expected to receive from the work experience or vocational placement and what they actually gained in each case. Pearson-product-moment correlation coefficients ranged from r=0.49 to r=0.70. They were all significant at the p.000 level of probability. This means that high expectations were more likely to be associated with high fulfilment of these expectations and vice versa and low expectations were more likely to be associated with low fulfilment of these expectations and vice versa. Table 70 compares data for expectations and outcomes and Pearson product-moment-correlation coefficients for the total group.

Table 70: Expectations and fulfilment of expectations

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response	Pearson product moment correlation coefficient sig. value
Work experience/vocational placement helps me to:							
1 ***Understand the work environment***							
Hoping to gain	47.3	44.0	5.3	1.7	1.0	.7	r=.49
Actually gained	45.0	44.4	6.4	2.1	0.7	1.4	p=.000
2 ***Find out if it is the type of job I really want***							
Hoping to gain	53.4	35.3	6.8	2.4	1.7	.4	r=.51
Actually gained	46.3	36.9	9.5	4.2	2.2	1.0	p=.000
3 ***Find out what sorts of skills I will require for the job***							
Hoping to gain	45.7	41.7	7.8	3.0	1.2	.6	r=.49
Actually gained	43.3	43.7	7.7	2.6	1.4	1.3	p=.000
4 ***Experience working with others***							
Hoping to gain	32.9	45.9	14.3	4.6	1.6	.7	r=.52
Actually gained	39.5	45.3	9.6	3.5	0.9	1.3	p=.000
5 ***Experience responsibility***							
Hoping to gain	31.9	44.5	15.1	5.6	2.2	.7	r=.58
Actually gained	34.4	43.3	12.8	6.0	2.1	1.4	p=.000
6 ***Become better informed about career choices available***							
Hoping to gain	32.7	43.3	17.5	4.1	1.8	.5	r=.56
Actually gained	30.6	41.2	18.2	5.9	2.6	1.4	p=.000
7 ***Better understand my employment potential***							
Hoping to gain	28.0	45.4	19.0	5.3	1.6	.7	r=.56
Actually gained	30.4	41.7	18.8	5.4	2.3	1.5	p=.000

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response	Pearson product moment correlation coefficient sig. value
8	***Increase confidence in my ability***							
	Hoping to gain	29.6	41.1	19.5	6.2	2.7	.8	r=.58
	Actually gained	31.7	41.2	17.9	5.4	2.3	1.5	p=.000
9	***Understand the number of different jobs available***							
	Hoping to gain	21.9	43.6	20.9	9.8	3.2	.7	r=.53
	Actually gained	23.4	41.8	20.3	9.8	3.3	1.3	p=.000
10	***Decide what course I should do at TAFE/university***							
	Hoping to gain	21.9	35.1	22.6	13.0	6.8	.5	r=.65
	Actually gained	20.3	29.7	24.4	16.9	7.4	1.4	p=.000
11	***Decide what subject I should do next year***							
	Hoping to gain	12.5	31.4	26.5	20.7	8.1	.7	r=.71
	Actually gained	17.2	25.7	25.5	21.3	8.8	1.6	p=.000
12	***Decide which apprenticeship/traineeship to do in future***							
	Hoping to gain	14.6	29.1	27.7	17.0	10.7	.8	r=.70
	Actually gained	15.5	25.3	27.3	19.4	10.9	1.5	p=.000

From table 70, it is evident that student expectations from work experience are generally being met to a high degree. There were five cases in which there was more than five per cent disagreement that the experience had provided desired outcomes. These are items 2, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

A better view of whether or not student expectations of work experience/vocational placements are being achieved can be obtained. This occurs by looking at each expectation and comparing this with the extent to which students believed it was achieved. In table 71, the perceived outcomes are tabulated for the students who agreed or strongly agreed with each expectation statement. Data are provided in terms of work experience and vocational placement students.

Table 71: Expectations and outcomes of work experience/ vocational placements

Expectations	Number of students expecting to gain knowledge and experience	Number and percentage of students reporting outcomes											
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No response	
		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Work experience/ vocational placement allowed me to:													
1 ***Understand the work environment***													
Work experience	1867	893	47.8	842	45.1	81	4.3	24	1.3	4	0.2	23	1.2
Vocational placement	219	114	52.1	89	40.6	13	5.9	2	0.9	1	0.4	-	-
	2086												
2 ***Find out if its the job I really want***													
Work experience	1818	940	51.7	670	36.9	133	7.3	43	2.4	17	0.9	15	0.8
Vocational placement	209	99	47.4	80	38.3	15	7.2	9	4.3	6	2.9	-	-
	2027												
3 ***Find out what sorts of skills are required for the job***													
Work experience	1790	842	47.0	792	44.2	94	5.3	30	1.7	11	0.6	21	1.2
Vocational placement	207	107	51.7	89	43.0	8	3.9	1	0.5	2	1.0	-	-
	1997												
4 ***Work with others***													
Work experience	1608	750	46.7	748	46.5	71	4.4	21	1.3	2	0.1	16	1.0
Vocational placement	193	95	49.2	87	45.1	8	4.1	1	0.5	2	1.0	-	-
	1801												
5 ***Experience responsibility***													
Work experience	1546	664	42.9	714	46.2	108	7.0	37	2.4		0.5	15	1.0
Vocational placement	200	82	41.0	104	52.0	10	5.0	3	1.5	1	0.5	–	–
	1746												
6 ***Become better informed about career choices available***													
Work experience	1543	592	38.4	701	45.4	174	11.3	49	3.2	10	0.6	17	1.1
Vocational placement	194	66	34.0	102	52.6	16	8.2	8	4.1	2	1.0	_	_
	1737												
7 ***Better understand my employment potential***													
Work experience	1485	582	39.2	681	45.9	158	10.6	32	2.2	11	0.7	21	1.4
Vocational placement	193	80	41.5	92	47.7	16	8.3	5	2.6	–	–	_	_
	1678												

Expectations	Number of students expecting to gain knowledge and experience	Number and percentage of students reporting outcomes											
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No response	
		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
8 ***Increase confidence in my ability***													
Work experience	1428	598	41.9	662	46.4	125	8.8	20	1.4	8	0.6	15	1.1
Vocational placement	188	78	41.5	90	47.9	16	8.5	3	1.6	1	0.5	–	–
	1616												
9 ***Understand the number of different jobs that are available***													
Work experience	1322	416	31.5	653	49.4	163	12.3	69	5.2	9	0.7	13	0.9
Vocational placement	174	57	32.6	85	48.9	22	12.6	9	5.2	1	0.6	–	–
	1496												
10 ***Decide which course to do at university/TAFE***													
Work experience	1167	395	33.8	480	41.1	182	15.6	84	7.2	15	1.3	11	0.9
Vocational placement	136	37	27.2	66	48.5	23	16.9	8	5.9	1	0.7	1	0.7
	1303												
11 ***Decide which subjects to do next year***													
Work experience	929	329	35.4	396	42.6	127	13.7	63	6.8	3	0.3	–	–
Vocational placement	75	21	28.0	32	42.7	17	22.7	4	5.3	1	1.3	–	–
	1004												
12 ***Decide which apprenticeship/ traineeship to do in future***													
Work experience	867	271	31.3	366	42.2	147	17.0	62	7.2	6	0.7	15	1.7
Vocational placement	131	43	32.8	58	44.3	25	19.1	4	3.1	1	0.8	–	–
	998												

When all responses were analysed, the differences between work experience and vocational placement students with regard to expectations and outcomes were not substantial. However, statistically significant differences between the two groups were found for items 7, 11, and 12. With respect to better understanding their employment potential, the means for vocational placement students were greater than for work experience students in both expectations and outcomes. The same was the case for making decisions about which apprenticeships/traineeships to do in the future. For making decisions about which subjects to do next year, it was the other way around. Statistics for these differences are presented in table 72.

Table 72: A comparison of statistically significant differences between expectations and perceived outcomes for vocational placement and work experience students

Item	Expectations outcomes	Variance (Levene's test)	Mean difference	T-value	Degrees of freedom	Probability	Confidence interval
Better understand my employment potential	Expectations	Equal	.1828	-2.75	2283	.006	(-.313, -.053)
	Outcomes	Unequal	.2231	3.49	313.74	.001	(-.349, -.097)
Decide which subjects to do next year	Expectations	Equal	.4306	5.34	2283	.000	(.272, .589)
	Outcomes	Equal	.3533	4.03	2283	.000	(.181, .525)
Decide which apprenticeships/traineeships to do in the future	Expectations	Equal	.3068	-3.62	2283	.000	(-.473,-.140)
	Outcomes	Equal	.2686	-3.05	2283	.002	(-.441,-.096)

Overall fulfilment of expectations

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which work experience or vocational placements had met their expectations. Well over three-quarters (80.3%) of work experience students and (78.2%) of vocational placement students indicated that their expectations had been met to a reasonable or great extent.

Table 73: Student reasons for indicating that their expectations had not been met (n=318)

Reason	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
The workplace is not relevant to future career choice	53	16.7	14.6
Students were not able to do the more interesting or complex jobs	51	16.0	14.0
Students were asked to do menial jobs others did not want to do	42	13.2	11.6
The work was boring	32	10.1	8.8
There were not enough meaningful things to do	19	5.9	5.2
There was not enough to do or see	45	14.2	12.4
Co-workers were rude or unfriendly	24	7.5	6.6
It was a lot different from what students expected	26	8.2	7.2
There was no prior organisation of tasks for students	16	5.0	4.4
Students were only required to observe rather than to perform tasks	11	3.5	3.0
Students were not given enough responsibility	14	4.4	3.9
Students lacked appropriate skill or experience	14	4.4	3.9
Placement was too short	16	5.0	4.4
	363		**100.0**

Students indicating that the experience had not met their expectations to a reasonable or great extent were also asked to report the reasons for this. The most frequently reported responses provided by these students related to the workplace not being relevant to future career choices. The second most frequently reported response related to the fact that students were often not able to do the more interesting and complex parts of jobs. This was followed by reports of students being often asked to perform basic or menial jobs that other workers didn't want to do. Table 73 provides details on student reasons for indicating that their expectations had not been met.

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to evaluate the extent to which they believed work experience and vocational placements should result in a number of outcomes for students. These included students being able to make decisions about future education and careers, experience the work environment and develop confidence and understanding of their employment potential and ability. Their responses are provided in table 74.

Table 74: Teacher perceptions of intended outcomes for work experience and vocational placements

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response
Work experience in the organisation:						
Gives student an opportunity to work with others						
Work experience	73.2	19.5	2.4	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	67.9	21.4	-	-	-	10.7
Helps students understand work environment						
Work experience	75.6	17.1	2.4	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	78.6	10.7	-	-	-	10.7
Helps students find out the skills they require for the job						
Work experience	36.6	56.1	2.4	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	71.4	17.9	-	-	-	10.7
Helps students decide on apprenticeship/traineeship to do in future						
Work experience	26.8	63.4	4.9	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	50.0	32.1	3.6	3.6	-	10.7
Helps students decide courses at university/TAFE						
Work experience	22.0	61.0	9.8	2.4	-	4.9
Vocational placements	32.1	46.4	-	7.1	3.6	10.7
Gives students more confidence in their ability						
Work experience	43.9	39.0	12.2	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	50.0	35.7	3.6	-	-	10.7

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response
Gives students opportunity to experience responsibility						
Work experience	53.7	31.7	4.9	4.9	-	4.9
Vocational placements	53.5	25.0	10.7	-	-	10.7
Helps students to decide subjects to do in the future						
Work experience	14.6	68.3	12.2	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	21.4	39.3	10.7	17.9	-	10.7
Gives students a better understanding of their career potential						
Work experience	31.7	46.3	7.1	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	46.4	35.7	7.1	-	-	10.7
Makes students better informed of career choices available						
Work experience	29.3	48.8	17.1	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	35.7	32.1	14.3	7.1	-	10.7
Gives students better understanding of different jobs available						
Work experience	29.3	46.3	17.1	2.4	-	4.9
Vocational placements	21.4	50.0	14.3	3.6	-	10.7
Helps students find out if it is the job they really want						
Work experience	51.2	39.0	4.9	-	-	4.9
Vocational placements	42.9	42.9	3.6	-	-	10.7

If we examine how the combined positive responses for each of the items are ranked, we find that there are similarities between teachers' rankings for work experience and those for vocational placements. This is supported by a spearman-rank correlation coefficient of 0.71 at the .01 level of significance. These details are provided in table 75.

Table 75: Teacher perceptions of intended outcomes for work experience/vocational placements

Outcomes	**Work experience (n=41)**		**Vocational placements (n=28)**	
Work experience in the organisation helps students to:	%	Rank	%	Rank
Find out the skills required for the job	92.6	1	89.3	1
Experience working with others	92.6	1	89.3	1
Better understand their work environment	92.6	1	89.3	1
Find out if it is the job they really want	90.2	4	82.1	6
Decide apprenticeship/traineeship to do in future	82.9	4	60.7	6
Experience responsibility	78.0	6	85.7	8
Decide subjects for next year	85.4	7	78.6	12
Decide university/TAFE courses	78.0	7	67.9	8
Increase confidence in their ability	90.2	7	82.1	4
Become aware of career choices available	75.6	10	71.4	11
Better understand their employment potential	82.9	11	78.6	4
Understand different jobs available	82.9	12	60.7	10

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were also asked to note the extent to which vocational placements allowed students to make decisions about their future education and careers, experience the work environment, and develop confidence and understanding of their employment potential and ability.

Their responses are presented in table 76.

Table 76: Co-ordinator perceptions of intended outcomes for vocational placements

	Co-ordinator ratings (n=170)					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
Work experience in the organisation:						
Gives students an understanding of the work environment	77.1	19.4	-	–	0.6	2.9
Provides students with the opportunity to work with others	74.7	19.4	3.5	–	0.6	1.8
Gives students an understanding of the skills they will need for the job	64.1	31.8	1.8	1.6	0.6	1.8
Helps students decide if its the job they really want	57.6	33.5	4.7	1.2	0.6	2.4
Gives students opportunity to experience responsibility	57.1	30.6	5.9	4.1	-	2.4
Gives students more confidence in their ability	53.5	37.6	5.9	1.2	-	1.8
Gives students a better understanding of their employment potential	42.9	45.3	7.1	2.4	-	2.4
Makes students better informed about what career choices are available	38.2	49.4	8.8	0.6	0.6	2.4
Gives students an understanding of the different jobs available	37.6	44.7	10.0	4.7	0.6	2.4
Helps students decide which apprenticeship or traineeship they should do in the future	29.4	57.1	9.4	1.2	0.6	2.4
Helps students decide which course to do at uni /TAFE	23.5	54.1	15.9	3.5	0.6	2.4
Helps students decide which subjects to do in the future	20.0	53.5	17.1	6.5	0.6	2.4

From table 76, we can see that all these outcomes are confirmed or strongly confirmed as suitable for vocational placements. However, table 76 also shows that the most favoured outcome envisaged is related to the placement providing students with an understanding of the work environment. Almost all (96.5%) of the co-ordinators agreed or strongly agreed that vocational placements should result in this outcome. In addition, highly favoured outcomes related to the placement providing students with a better understanding of the skills required to do the job, and giving students an opportunity to work with others. Table 77 provides a rank ordering of combined strongly agree/agree responses provided by co-ordinators to each statement describing outcomes.

Table 77: Co-ordinators' expectations of outcomes for student participation in work experience/vocational placements (n=170)

	No. of co-ordinators	%	Rank order
Understand the work environment	164	96.5	1
Find out the sort of skills required for the job	163	95.9	2
Opportunity to work with others	160	90.1	3
Find out if its the job I really want	155	91.1	4
Increase confidence in my ability	155	91.1	4
Understand my employment potential	150	88.2	6
Become better informed about career choices that are available	149	87.6	7
Experience responsibility	149	87.6	7
Decide which apprenticeship/traineeship to do in the future	147	86.5	9
Understand different jobs available	140	82.3	10
Decide which courses to do at TAFE/university	132	77.6	11
Decide subjects to do next year	125	73.5	12

Table 78 provides the rank ordering of student ratings of the extent to which their participation in work experience/vocational placements allowed them to fulfil certain expectations. It also provides co-ordinator and teacher ratings of the extent to which they believed vocational placements should produce similar student outcomes. These are based on strongly agree/agree ratings provided by respondents.

Table 78: Comparison of rank ordering of student and co-ordinator perceptions of work experience/vocational placements outcomes for students

Expectations	Rank orders									
	Vocational placement (co-ordinators)		Vocational placement (teachers)		Vocational placement (students)		Work experience (teachers)		Work experience students	
	Rank	%	*Rank*	%	*Rank*	%	*Rank*	%	*Rank*	%
Understand work environment	1	96.5	1	89.3	4	92.7	1	92.6	2	92.9
Find out sort of skills required	2	95.9	1	89.3	2	94.0	1	92.6	3	91.2
Opportunity to work with others	3	90.1	1	89.3	1	94.3	1	92.6	1	93.2
Find out if it's the job I really want	4	91.1	6	82.1	7	85.7	4	90.2	5	88.6
Increase confidence in my ability	4	91.1	12	60.7	5	89.4	7	82.9	6	88.3
Better understand my employment potential	6	88.3	4	85.7	6	89.2	11	78.0	7	85.1
Opportunity to experience responsibility	7	87.6	8	78.6	3	93.0	6	85.4	4	89.1
Become better informed about career choices	7	87.6	11	67.9	8	84.6	10	78.0	8	83.8
Decide which apprenticeship/traineeship to do in the future	9	86.5	6	82.1	11	73.5	4	90.2	12	70.7
Understand the number of different jobs available	10	82.3	10	71.4	9	81.5	12	75.6	9	80.9
Decide which courses to do at university	11	77.6	8	78.6	9	75.7	7	82.9	11	74.9
Decide which subjects to do next year	12	73.5	12	60.7	12	70.7	7	82.9	10	78.0

Spearman-rank correlation co-efficients were also produced to show relationships between the rankings. These are presented in table 79.

Table 79: Spearman-rank correlation co-efficients and probability levels showing positive relationships between teacher, co-ordinator and student perceptions of outcomes for work experience and vocational placements

Groupings	Co-ordinators	Teachers (vocational placements)	Teachers (work experience)	Students (vocational placements)
Teachers (vocational placements)	.62 p=.03			
Teachers (work experience)	.53 p=.07	.71 p=.01		
Students (vocational placements)	.75 p=.005	.59 p=.04	.55 p=.07	
Students (work experience)	.77 p=.003	.59 p=.04	.62 p=.03	.94 p=.000

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were also asked to provide information on what they expected from students in the workplace. They first rated the extent to which they believed students should demonstrate particular academic, technical and interpersonal skills and attributes. The frequency with which these essential skills and attributes were identified by supervisors along with a rank ordering of these results are presented in table 80.

If we look at the top ten of all these expectations, only one of them relates to specific skills. This item relates to reading skills. The remainder deal with personal attributes. It is also interesting to note that numeracy, maths and computer skills are rated as essential by very few supervisors.

Supervisors were also asked to rate the extent to which they believed students had actually demonstrated these skills and attributes during work experience/vocational placements.

Table 80: Essential skills and attributes expected of students by workplace supervisors (n=292)

Skills and attributes	No. of cases	% of cases	Rank order
Courtesy	251	86.0	1
Willingness to learn	244	83.6	2
Co-operation	243	83.0	3
Punctuality	236	80.1	4
Ability to learn	169	58.0	5
Responsiveness	157	53.8	6
Self-discipline	155	53.1	7
Reading skills	140	48.0	8
Initiative	140	48.0	8
Attention to detail	128	43.8	10
Safety awareness	128	43.8	10
Spoken language skills	114	39.0	12
Team skills	103	35.3	13
Ability to communicate	99	34.0	14
Enthusiasm for the job	97	33.2	15
Numeracy skills	88	30.1	16
Confidence	76	26.0	17
Written language skills	68	23.3	18
Cleaning skills	63	21.6	20
Organisational skills	63	21.6	20
Following office procedures	56	19.2	21
Maths skills	51	17.5	22
Completing forms	28	9.6	23
Computer skills	26	8.9	24
Academic knowledge	26	8.9	24
Knowledge of filing	15	5.1	26
Ability to speak a second language	3	1.0	27

Table 81 presents data on expectations in the form of essential and desirable ratings and outcomes in the form of actual demonstration of the skills and attributes by students.

When the data in table 81 are examined, it is evident that punctuality and courtesy are considered to be essential for substantial numbers of supervisors and stand out from the rest as the most likely to be demonstrated almost always by students.

Table 81: Supervisor expectations of skills and attributes and the extent to which they are demonstrated by students (n=292)

Skills and attributes	Expectations	Outcomes (skills and attributes actually demonstrated by students)				
		Almost always	Sometimes	Not sure	Almost never	No response
Language, literacy and numeracy skills						
Reading skills	Essential n=140	41.4	37.1	16.4	2.1	4.1
	Desirable n=124	26.6	40.3	21.8	5.6	7.2
Spoken language skills	Essential n=114	33.3	54.3	8.0	1.8	3.4
	Desirable n=135	29.4	55.3	18.5	2.2	7.5
Numeracy skills	Essential n=88	27.3	50.0	20.5	1.1	3.0
	Desirable n=154	21.4	37.7	32.5	3.9	7.2
Written language skills	Essential n=68	25.0	45.6	25.0	1.5	3.0
	Desirable n=158	22.2	38.6	28.5	6.3	8.9
Maths skills	Essential n=51	27.4	58.8	11.8	2.0	3.4
	Desirable n=156	15.4	43.6	37.2	5.1	8.2
Ability to speak a second language	Essential n=3	66.6	0.0	33.3	0.0	3.8
	Desirable n=45	6.7	24.4	33.3	31.1	17.5
Capacity for learning						
Willingness to learn	Essential n=244	45.9	46.7	3.0	1.2	2.0
	Desirable n=42	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0	4.1
Ability to learn	Essential n=169	46.7	47.3	5.3	0.0	2.0
	Desirable n=114	43.0	50.9	17.8	1.2	3.8
Technical skills						
Attention to detail	Essential n=128	7.8	68.8	14.1	6.3	2.7
	Desirable n=135	8.1	65.2	19.3	3.7	5.5
Following office procedures	Essential n=56	41.1	41.1	10.7	3.6	3.1
	Desirable n=126	20.6	40.5	28.6	5.6	14.7
Completing forms	Essential n=28	32.1	35.7	17.9	10.7	3.8
	Desirable n=128	12.5	42.2	32.0	7.0	16.1
Computer skills	Essential n=26	23.1	42.3	19.2	11.5	2.1
	Desirable n=133	10.5	64.3	28.7	3.5	16.1
Organisational skills						
Punctuality skills	Essential n=236	82.6	15.7	0.0	0.0	1.4
	Desirable n=52	84.6	11.5	0.0	0.0	3.1
Cleaning skills	Essential n=63	31.7	58.5	2.4	4.9	4.1
	Desirable n=171	17.4	50.4	19.1	6.1	15.8
Organisational skills	Essential n=63	19.0	52.4	19.0	6.3	3.4
	Desirable n=171	11.7	53.8	27.5	3.5	7.5
Knowledge						
Safety awareness	Essential n=128	23.4	47.7	18.8	8.6	1.4
	Desirable n=135	8.9	45.9	33.3	9.6	4.5

Skills and attributes	Expectations	Outcomes (skills and attributes actually demonstrated by students)				
		Almost always	Sometimes	Not sure	Almost never	No response
Academic knowledge	Essential n=26	26.9	53.8	11.5	3.8	6.2
	Desirable n=193	13.9	55.4	25.4	2.1	3.1
Knowledge of filing	Essential n=15	13.3	40.0	26.6	13.3	4.1
	Desirable n=81	8.6	39.5	30.9	16.0	19.5
Personal attributes						
Courtesy	Essential n=251	77.3	19.5	1.2	0.0	1.0
	Desirable n=37	67.5	27.0	0.0	0.0	3.8
Self-discipline	Essential n=155	21.9	65.8	6.5	4.5	2.4
	Desirable n=128	14.0	66.4	14.1	2.3	4.1
Initiative	Essential n=140	15.0	70.0	28.6	9.3	2.1
	Desirable n=139	10.1	78.4	5.0	4.3	4.1
Enthusiasm for the job	Essential n=97	35.7	55.1	4.3	2.7	3.4
	Desirable n=185	36.1	53.6	8.2	0.0	2.1
Confidence	Essential n=76	25.0	63.2	3.9	6.6	2.4
	Desirable n=199	12.1	70.4	9.0	4.5	4.8
Interpersonal skills						
Co-operation	Essential n=243	60.5	35.4	1.2	0.008	2.4
	Desirable n=43	58.1	34.8	2.3	0.0	4.1
Responsiveness	Essential n=157	29.9	59.9	6.4	2.5	1.4
	Desirable n=130	31.5	58.5	6.9	0.0	3.4
Team skills	Essential n=103	23.3	58.3	9.7	5.8	1.7
	Desirable n=166	10.8	53.6	35.3	4.8	4.1
Ability to communicate	Essential n=99	31.0	61.0	6.0	2.0	1.4
	Desirable n=187	28.3	58.6	8.1	1.0	3.8

Co-operation is the third most frequently identified attribute to be most frequently demonstrated by students. Almost two-thirds of the supervisors who identified this as an essential attribute also indicated that students almost always demonstrated it. This is followed by ability to learn and willingness to learn. However, both show that less than half of the supervisors identifying these attributes as essential perceive these as almost always demonstrated by students.

It is also important to note from the data presented in table 81, that when supervisors identify specific skills as being essential or desirable, they are less likely to be demonstrated by the majority of students.

Future employment

Student survey

Whether or not work experience or vocational placements have immediate vocational or employment benefits for students can be discovered. This can occur by exploring whether or not students have been offered further employment or training opportunities by the company at which they did their work experience or vocational placement. About a fifth of the total group had been offered further work experience opportunities and a tenth of the group, part-time employment. Very few of them had been offered either full-time employment, a traineeship or an apprenticeship. Table 82 presents a breakdown of the number of students who had been offered employment or training opportunities by employers.

Table 82: Employment and training offers made to students (n=721)

Type of offer	Percentage of students receiving offers	
	Work experience n=613	Vocational placements n=108
Part-time employment	28.0	38.2
Full-time employment	5.3	9.8
Apprenticeship	5.3	8.9
Traineeship	4.3	3.3
More work experience	57.0	39.8

Other frequently reported offers included casual or holiday work (n=17), references (n=7) and voluntary work (n=12). Other responses appear in appendix A1. Vocational placement students were far more likely to be offered full-time and part-time employment and apprenticeships than were work experience students.

Just over a half (57.0%) of the work experience students and almost two-thirds (64.8%) of vocational placement students indicated that they had accepted employer offers.

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to report the number of students from their programs who had been offered full or part-time employment or further training. Substantial numbers of supervisors reported that students had been offered full-time employment and part-time employment as a result of vocational placements. Fewer numbers reported that students had been offered apprenticeships or traineeships. The most common offer was part-time employment, followed by full-time employment. Far fewer students were offered further work experience, apprenticeships or traineeships. A breakdown of the numbers of students in programs co-ordinated by these respondents receiving offers from employers is presented in table 83.

Well over one-third (35.9%) of co-ordinators did not indicate that any of the above offers were made to students in their programs. A small percentage of co-ordinators (10.6%) included that it was difficult to estimate numbers of students that had been made various offers because no records were kept. When co-ordinators were asked how many of the students in their programs decided to continue their training as a result of being involved in work experience/vocational placements, just under half (48.8%) provided a response. They reported that a total of 859 students had decided to continue to upgrade qualifications as a result of doing a vocational placement.

Table 83: Offers made to students as a result of vocational placements (n=109)

Type of offer	No. of offers	% of responses
Full-time employment	470	25.7
Part-time employment	744	40.7
More work experience	130	7.1
An apprenticeship	277	15.1
A traineeship	209	11.4
	1830	**100.0**

Supervisor survey

To test the assumption that work experience/vocational placements provide an entrée into jobs, supervisors were asked to indicate the number of job offers they had made to students. Their responses showed that few (27.1%) of the companies in this study had not provided any further offers. These were in the form of either full-time, part-time or casual employment, apprenticeships or traineeships, references or further work experience. This means that substantial numbers of employers are providing students with some follow-up employment experience or recommendations to other employers. The most frequently provided offer was non-full-time work in the form of permanent casual or permanent part-time work. This was followed by the provision of references and then by further offers of work experience. Full-time employment was the fourth most frequently reported offer. Table 84 presents the number of companies providing such offers for students.

Table 84: Employer offers made to students resulting from work experience/vocational placements

Type of offer	No. of companies making the offer	% of responses
Part-time work: Permanent part-time work (25) Permanent casual work (64) Casual work (19)	103	27.8
References	99	26.7
More work experience	67	18.1
Full-time work	56	15.1
Apprenticeship	26	7.0
Traineeship	17	4.6
Recommendation to others	3	0.8
	371	100.0

When we examine the number of offers provided by these organisations, offers of further work experience accounted for the largest number of offers. References accounted for the next largest number of offers (at least two of these were recommendations to other companies to employ the student). This was followed by offers of permanent casual work and then by offers of full-time work. Table 85 presents the details relating to the frequency with which each offer was made.

Table 85: Frequency of offers made to students resulting from their participation in work experience/vocational placements (n=292)

Type of offer	No. of cases	% of responses
References	234	23.4
Work experience	308	30.7
Permanent casual work	172	17.2
Full-time work	132	13.2
Permanent part-time work	35	3.5
Apprenticeships	56	5.6
Traineeships	40	4.0
Casual or vacation work	25	2.5
	1002	**100.0**

It seems, then, that involvement in work experience/vocational placements is more than 44.3 per cent more likely to be followed by offers of further work experience than any form of casual work, and more than 47.2 per cent more likely than offers of full-time work.

In addition, a small group (3.8%) of respondents indicated that no statistics were kept to allow them to provide any data on this question. Others (14.4%) either provided a tick (✔) to indicate that offers had been made or described the proportions as either 'some', 'several', 'many', 'most' or 'all'. The frequency with which these indications were used for each type of offer is presented in appendix Y.

Discussion and implications

Meeting student expectations

Students' expectations that experience in the workplace would allow them to participate in the work environment, find out about the types of jobs they would like to pursue, and develop personal and interpersonal skills were met in a major way. This means that work experience and vocational placements are perceived as successful activities by the majority of students.

However, we must not disregard the effect of positive bias when respondents are presented with a list of statements of expectations and outcomes and asked to rate the extent to which these are true for them. For this reason it was important to use a variety of approaches. It is reassuring, then, that when students were asked to reflect on their overall experience and to rate the extent to which their expectations were fulfilled, we obtained a similar evaluation. The overwhelming majority of students believed that their expectations had been met.

Meeting co-ordinator expectations

Co-ordinators generally agreed with students about what outcomes work experience/vocational placements should provide. They were, however, more likely than students to give a higher ranking to the expectation that the experience should increase the student's confidence in their abilities.

Co-ordinators expected workplace supervisors to provide the appropriate training and supervision of students. They required supervisors to provide students with adequate explanations of skills and activities and appropriate feedback on their performance. This meant showing students the correct and safe ways of doing things and correcting their techniques if they were wrong. The extent to which co-ordinators' expectations for students or employers are fulfilled is not directly observable.

However, information from students and employers can, to some extent, fill this gap. The great majority of students believed that their actual experience in the workplace allowed them to fulfill their expectations. In many cases, these were similar to those that co-ordinators had for them. In addition, summary comments provided by co-ordinators offer more evidence of the positive effects placements have on student achievement, personal development and extending their horizons about the world of work.

Like students, however, co-ordinators were less likely to believe that experience in the workplace would allow students to make decisions about further study or apprenticeships or traineeships. One reason for this may be that co-ordinators believe that such questions are better answered in the classroom. Another reason may be that by the time students are in Years 11 or 12, their courses of study have already been decided and there is little that experience in the workplace can do to change these decisions. A more plausible reason might be that co-ordinators have not encouraged students to use their time in the workplace to find out from experienced workers or supervisors the courses of study they should do to obtain a similar job. It would seem to make sense for students to use their time in the workplace to gather as much information as possible about this issue.

Meeting employer expectations

The findings of this study show that personal attributes rather than specific technical skills or expertise are what the great majority of employers consider to be essential for students in workplaces. Personal attributes like punctuality, willingness to learn, ability to learn, self-discipline, courtesy, responsiveness and co-operation were considered to be essential by more than half the supervisors in this study. Of these, punctuality, willingness to learn, courtesy and co-operation were considered to be essential by more than four in every five supervisors in this study. Substantial numbers of supervisors also considered reading skills, spoken language skills, team skills, safety awareness and initiative to be essential.

There were very few areas where supervisors indicated that students almost always demonstrated attributes or skills considered to be essential. However, three-quarters or more of these supervisors generally felt that students would almost always demonstrate punctuality and courtesy. Students were less likely to demonstrate ability to learn, willingness to learn, self-discipline, initiative, safety awareness, team skills, responsiveness, spoken language skills and reading skills to the same extent.

These findings tell us that personal attributes are far more important to the majority of employers than technical expertise or academic skills. They also tell us that students must have capacity and willingness for learning.

Schools can do much to teach students about the attributes that employers are looking for. That is not to say that they ignore the basic skills, for there are still substantial numbers of employers who believe that numeracy and literacy skills are important. But schools must help students understand they need to, at all times, show employers that they are willing and able to learn and be prepared to do their share of the work with work mates and customers.

What is puzzling about these findings is that few supervisors suggest that computer skills, ability to speak a second language, academic knowledge and written language skills are essential skills and abilities for students coming into their workplaces. This does not mean they believe that these should not be part of a student's repertoire of skills, for many supervisors indicate these skills to be desirable for students.

Employment offers

Students

Although it is evident that students in this study perceive the experience to be beneficial in terms of personal development and skills training, very few of them had received offers of full-time employment, apprenticeships or traineeships. This may be a reflection of the age of the students who were, in the main, in Years 10 and 11. It could also be a reflection of the general state of the economy, where businesses are not in the position to take on extra staff.

The situation is more promising for offers of part-time employment. This suggests that work experience and vocational placement are providing an entrée for students into the part-time workforce while they are continuing their education. If more employers could be made to consider students for part-time jobs while they are still at school, it may help students develop the skills that are especially required for participation in the paid workforce.

Co-ordinators

Student benefits in terms of offers of future employment or extra experience were also reported by co-ordinators. Information on the number of students in their programs who have received such offers reveals a number of trends. It shows that employers are more likely to offer students part-time rather than full-time employment and place less emphasis on offers of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Employers

Employers in this study had provided either part-time, casual or full-time employment, further offers of work experience, references, or offers of traineeships and apprenticeships to substantial numbers of students. This is added evidence of their using work experience/vocational placement programs for recruitment purposes or fulfilling their community obligations by providing support for students. This took the form of references, more work experience or recommendations to other companies.

This is also an example of work experience/vocational placement programs providing benefits for both employers and students. Employers get to see students in action before they are ready to start work. Students get to see whether or not they would like to work in a particular industry, and in some cases get a 'foot in the door'.

Analysing benefits

The tasks employers expect students to perform during placements

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to specify the kinds of tasks they expected of students during work experience/vocational placements. They identified about 200 different activities or tasks that they asked students to do or be involved with. The most frequently reported of these related to the performance of specific teaching or childcare tasks. This was followed by cleaning and housekeeping duties and administration tasks involving the filing, sorting and collating of paper records and other materials. Also frequently reported were answering telephones and performing other reception duties.

Table 86 sets out the different tasks supervisors required of their students. These have been grouped into major headings.

Table 86: Activities or tasks given to students on work experience/vocational placements (n=265)

Tasks	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Performing specific teaching or childcare tasks (e.g. setting up equipment, supervising students, reading stories, relating to and working with children, preparing activities and materials for children, listening to reading, packing up activities, taking small groups, dressing children, making name labels, folding nappies and rugs, changing nappies, assisting with student evaluation, feeding children, settling children down for sleep)	84	31.7	8.9
Cleaning and housekeeping tasks (e.g. sweeping, washing, emptying rubbish bins, collection of litter)	79	29.8	8.4
Filing, sorting, collating, stamping (e.g. paper records, materials, preparing information kits, preparing folders, folding brochures, accounts, counting centres, stamping brochures etc.)	74	27.9	7.9
Answering telephones and reception duties (e.g. handling enquiries, taking messages)	69	26.0	7.4
Entering, retrieving and manipulating information on computer	68	25.7	7.3
Assisting qualified or experienced tradespersons and other workers on industry-specific tasks	67	25.3	7.1
Performing specific retail industry tasks (e.g. stocking shelves, placing orders, pricing stock, packing orders, shipping orders, stocktaking, warehousing, displaying stock, selling goods, operating the cash register, conducting stock control, unpacking orders, handling lay-by, clearing new stock, sorting stock, processing prescriptions, undertaking merchandising tasks)	57	21.5	6.1

Tasks	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Performing hospitality industry tasks (e.g. kitchen work, waiting, catering, bar work, setting and clearing tables, preparing minibars, cutting and peeling vegetables, making cappuccinos, preparing and cooking food, polishing silverware and glassware, making beds, taking orders, folding napkins, moulding and chopping bread, mixing dough, weighing flour, decorating and displaying cakes)	57	21.5	6.1
Handling mail (e.g. sending and receiving mail, sending faxes, delivering messages)	55	20.8	5.9
Performing general administrative and clerical tasks (e.g. running errands, completing forms, banking, issuing receipts, handling money, book-keeping, assessing applications, completing worksheets)	54	20.4	5.8
Observing other workers performing tasks	54	20.4	5.8
Photocopying materials	48	18.1	5.1
Dealing with customers (e.g. making tea and coffee, serving customers)	40	15.1	4.3
Handling and caring for animals (e.g. holding, grooming and walking animals, preparing food, feeding animals, preparing animals for surgery, applying first-aid to animals, preparing animal rooms)	22	8.3	2.3
Performing real and simulated architectural and draughting tasks (e.g. tracing, rendering, experimental drafting, drawing with drawing machine, technical drawing, drafting and printing plans and drawings, measuring, drawing footing designs)	17	6.4	1.8
Performing specific horticultural tasks (e.g. weeding, applying fertiliser, raking, pruning, planting trees, tending greens, maintaining trails, grounds and parks)	15	5.7	1.6
Performing specific engineering and automotive tasks (e.g. metal work, dismantling vehicles, engine work, preparing vehicles for paintwork, soldering, basic assembly tasks, simple manufacturing processes, computer-aided design [CAD] tasks)	14	5.3	1.5
Performing media writing and announcing tasks (e.g. writing commercials, performing layout tasks, writing articles, editing, writing press releases, writing stories, participating in auditions, reading on air, operating on-air tap, interviewing subjects)	12	4.5	1.3
Performing general health care tasks (e.g. dressing patients, assisting with meals, nursing patients, preparing sterile packs, setting up equipment, preparing surgery kits, preparing hot packs)	7	2.6	0.8
Others: Completing individual projects (5) Performing research tasks (9) (e.g. laboratory procedures, telephone interviews, conducting surveys, photo research, industrial projects) Performing tasks related to the fishing industry (8) (e.g. storing fish, scaling fish, cutting off heads, testing water, grading fish, keeping records of fish manoevres, making aquariums and ponds) Performing specific translation tasks, preparing glossaries (2) Performing specific photography tasks (1) Performing boat-building tasks (3) (e.g. waxing moulds, cutting out materials, laminating) Performing specific library tasks (4) (e.g. retrieving, searching) Performing hairdressing tasks (4) (e.g. shampooing, removing rollers) Performing general funeral parlour tasks (1) (not body handling) Performing graphic design tasks (3) Issuing tickets (1) Performing jobs as directed by supervisor (5)	46	17.4	4.9
	939	**354.4**	**100.0**

What is important to note from table 86 is that many separate activities related to teaching or childcare have been grouped together. This grouping has, as a result, appeared as the largest group. However, the tasks related to general clerical duties have, in the main, been kept separate. When these are grouped together these outnumber teaching and childcare activities by almost five to one. When we compare these activities within the group it is evident that there are three major forms of activities that supervisors expect of students. These are: filing, sorting, collating and stamping activities; answering telephones and performing reception duties; and entering, retrieving and manipulating information (wordprocessing, desk top publishing) tasks.

However, it is also important to note that tasks relating to specific occupations form another substantial group. This finding shows that employers are committed to including students in specific tasks rather than purely observational ones.

What students learnt to do during placements

Student survey

In response to the question asking them to specify what they had learnt to do during their time in the workplace, work experience/vocational placement students reported on experience and knowledge gained, behaviours developed, and skills practised.

By far the most frequent single response described experience in, and knowledge gained, of particular trades or professions. That is, students felt they had improved their understanding of the nature of the occupation either through experiencing events or accompanying workplace staff as they went about their business. This was especially so in cases where students were learning about the legal and medical professions and other areas which required advanced training. The most frequently reported behaviours that had been developed during the work experience/vocational placement were responsibility, independence, confidence and using initiative. The most frequently reported skills learnt were:

- skills of working with others and in teams
- general clerical skills (filing, photocopying, faxing, answering telephones) and operating machinery and equipment skills
- communication skills
- computer skills

When industry-specific skills are combined together, the findings show that students in this study were engaged in a considerable amount of skills development. It is interesting to note that cleaning skills were only reported by 1.3 per cent of students. Table 87 provides us with the opportunity to have an in-depth look at the various learning outcomes identified by students.

Table 87: What students learn to do during work experience and vocational placements (n=2131)

Learning outcome	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Improved knowledge and understanding of: 685 = 32.1%			
Occupation and industry	303		
Working environment	84		
Business operations	75		
Unsuitability of career choice	40		
Suitability of career choice	33		
Essential criteria for entry into occupation	29		
Demands of working	29		
Occupational health and safety	27		
Work ethic	26		
Appropriate business behaviour (taking orders, deportment, dress, confidence etc.)	26		
Subject matter	13		
	685	**32.1**	**23.3**
Interpersonal and personal skill development 714 = 33.5%			
Teamwork skills (working with others etc.)	203		
Communication skills	182		
Responsibility, initiative, leadership, confidence, patience, self-knowledge, problem solving	140		
Customer service skills	135		
Organisation and time management skills, accuracy	54		
	714	**33.5**	**24.3**
Technical skill development 1133 = 53.2%			
Computer skills	179		
General clerical skills (e.g. photocopying, filing, faxing, answering telephones)	171		
Operating and servicing machinery and equipment skills	136		
General hospitality skills (preparing rooms, servicing rooms, preparing tables, clearing tables etc.)	67		
General retail skills (shelving etc.)	62		
Automechanic and car-painting skills	59		
Welding, soldering, electrical, locksmithing skills	49		
Specific hospitality skills (e.g. cooking, bartending, hotel management, butchery)	48		
Design skills, drafting skills, architectural skills	40		
Construction industry skills (building, plumbing, furniture making)	39		
Writing skills (articles, advertisements, reports)	29		
Basic medical procedures (e.g. x-ray, vet procedures, temperatures, dental assisting, preparing hot packs etc.)	29		
Hairdressing, beautician skills	27		
Accounting skills	23		
Agricultural skills	22		
Landscaping, nursery, gardening skills	20		
Laboratory skills	19		
Complex clerical skills (e.g. bookkeeping)	18		
Complex retail skills (e.g. stock control etc.)	15		
Research skills (including marine biology)	15		
Travel industry skills	11		
Aviation skills	10		
Photographic skills	9		
Fitting and turning skills	9		

Learning outcome	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Surveying skills	8		
Driving skills, boating skills	7		
Pharmaceutical industry skills (locating medications etc.)	5		
Fire fighting, policing skills	3		
Printing skills	2		
Fishing skills	2		
	1133	**53.2**	**38.5**
Training skills 147 = 6.9%			
Teaching young children	85		
Teaching, coaching skills	56		
Training animals	6		
	147	**6.9**	**5.0**
Caring skills 172 = 8.1%			
Caring for young children	87		
Caring for animals	38		
Caring for patients	36		
Caring for disabled	11		
	172	**8.1**	**5.9**
Cleaning skills 89 = 4.2%			
Cleaning, washing	89	4.2	3.0
	2940	**138.0**	**100.0**

In addition, at least 4.6 per cent of students responded that they had either learnt nothing, learnt nothing new or learnt not much during their work experience/vocational placements.

Possibility of learning workplace skills at school

Student survey

Work experience students were far less likely than vocational placement students to believe that it was possible for them to learn at school, the skills they had learnt in the workplace. A small percentage were not able to make up their minds. A better view of these data is presented in table 88.

Table 88: Student perceptions of the possibility of learning skills at school that they learnt in the workplace

Student perception	% of work experience (n=1994)	% of vocational placement students (n=230)
Able to learn skills at school	9.2	16.9
Perhaps skills could be taught at school	18.8	28.3
Not sure	3.7	4.8
Not able to learn skills at school	68.4	50.0
	100.0	**100.0**

Perceived benefits for students

Student survey

Students were also asked to specify what they felt to be the value of what they had learnt to do during their work experience or vocational placements. About one-fifth of the students (20.4%) also indicated that what they had learnt had been extremely valuable, useful or worthwhile.

Although students reported about 52 different benefits from their workplace learning, the most frequently reported benefits dealt with improved knowledge and understanding about the occupation and their own suitability for these occupations. The next most frequently reported benefits related to employment. Students believed that their workplace learning would stand them in good stead for furthering their future employment prospects. Also frequently reported was the perceived benefit of what the experience could do for students in the future and the personal uses that could be derived from the skills that had been learnt.

Table 89 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the perceived benefits derived from workplace learning.

Table 89: Students' perceptions of value of skills learned during work experience/vocational placements (n=1853)

Perceived benefit	No. of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Provision of employment-related benefits (n=903) 48.0%			
Provides benefits for future employment	156		
Increases experience of working environment (real world)	82		
Increases experience and knowledge	56		
Provides assistance in obtaining jobs	52		
Improves knowledge for use in school/TAFE courses	37		
Provides head start over other candidates (obtaining jobs, developing contacts, obtaining references, working in the occupation and in occupation-related studies [e.g. medicine, biology])	81		
Essential requirements for the job	27		
Assists in preparation for workforce	34		
Provides valuable or very valuable experience	378		
	903	48.0	38.0
Improvement of knowledge and understanding (n=520) 28.1%			
Knowledge of suitability or unsuitability of career choice	220		
Understanding of occupation, organisation, industry and business	201		
Understanding of expectations and requirements for the job	56		

Perceived benefit	**No. of responses**	**% of cases**	**% of responses**
Understanding requirements for entry into the occupation	17		
Understanding of hygiene, health and safety	10		
Knowledge of own skills and abilities and potential to work	8		
Helps decide further study options	8		
	520	**28.1**	**22.2**
Improvement of technical expertise (n=174) 8.0%			
Develops specific industry skills	116		
Develops ability to complete tasks effectively and efficiently	24		
Develops computer skills	15		
Develops practical skills	9		
Develops ability to work with equipment	10		
	174	**9.3**	**7.4**
Development of personal and interpersonal skills (n=181) 9.8%			
Develops teamwork and ability to get on with others	48		
Develops communication skills	43		
Develops confidence	32		
Develops responsibility and initiative	24		
Develops tolerance and patience with others	13		
Develops confidence in interacting with others	11		
Develops independence and ability to cope with pressure	10		
	181	**9.8**	**7.7**
Preparation for future (n=253) 13.7%			
Increases skills and knowledge for future use	128		
Increases ability to use skills and knowledge for personal use and in later life	125		
	253	**13.7**	**10.8**
Other			
Unsure of benefits	51		
Of some use if pursuing career in field	41		
Of limited or no value	214		
	306	**16.5**	**13**
	2337		**100**

Perceived school benefits

Students were asked if there was anything they learned during work experience/vocational placements that they had found useful back at school. Almost three-quarters (71.9%) of students provided a response. Of these, more than half (56.6%) reported that what they had learnt in the workplace had proved to be of no use to them now they were back at school. A small proportion (3.8%) reported that what they had learnt was not relevant to the things that were taught at school.

Table 90: School benefits derived from workplace learning (n=1644)

Perceived benefit	No. of students	% of cases	% of responses
Improvement in technical skills and ability to operate machinery and equipment	151	9.2	20.3
Improvement in ability to communicate	130	7.9	17.5
Increased knowledge and ability to succeed in school subjects	112	6.8	15.1
Increased independence, responsibility and maturity	70	4.3	9.4
Increased ability to make career and subject choices	45	2.7	6.1
Overall increase in knowledge and experience	45	2.7	6.1
Improved ability to work with others	48	2.9	6.5
Improved ability to organise and complete tasks on time	37	2.3	5.0
Improved confidence	35	2.1	4.7
Appreciation of work and school similarities and differences	22	1.3	3.0
Improved motivation to do well at school	17	1.0	2.3
Increased appreciation of and respect for workmates	14	0.9	1.9
Increased patience, tolerance, sensitivity and compassion when dealing with others	15	0.9	2.0
	741	**44.1**	**100.0**

The most frequently reported school benefits derived from students' workplace learning were concerned with improved ability to succeed in school subjects and to carry out technical skills and operate equipment. The next most frequently reported school benefit was improved communication skills and ability to get on with others. Also important were increased ability to make decisions on subject choices and improvements in attitude towards school and life in general.

Table 90 presents a comprehensive breakdown of more frequently reported school benefits derived from time in the workplace. The percentage of cases column in table 90 is based on the total number of students responding to the question, including those who reported receiving no school benefits from workplace experience.

Teacher survey

Teachers were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the experience had been worthwhile in terms of student outcomes. The great majority of respondents indicated that they believed the experience to be worthwhile for work experience students and vocational placement students. These data are presented in table 91.

Table 91: Teacher ratings of worth of workplace experience for students

Rating	Work experience (n=40)	Vocational placements (n=28)
Extremely worthwhile	46.3	82.1
Worthwhile	43.9	3.6
Neutral	2.4	3.6
Not worthwhile	-	-
Not at all worthwhile	-	-
Not specified	7.3	10.7
	100.0	**100.0**

From table 91, it is evident that all teachers believe that vocational placements are either very worthwhile or worthwhile. Only four respondents could either not make up their minds or failed to provide an answer for work experience placements. However, it is also evident that teachers responsible for vocational placements are almost twice as likely to say that experience in the workplace is extremely worthwhile than those responsible for work experience.

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators were asked to rate the value of a vocational placement in terms of perceived benefits for students. Almost all (97.3%) of co-ordinators rated vocational placements as valuable with (94.0%) of them rating it as very valuable and extremely valuable. Very few (1.8%) could not make up their minds or rated it as having 'only limited value'. This means that co-ordinators are strongly in favour of the outcomes that placements have for students.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were also asked to indicate what they perceived to be gained by students undertaking work experience/vocational placements. The most frequently reported benefits perceived for students related to their gaining a more realistic idea of the workplace. This was followed by providing an opportunity for students to decide whether or not they would like to pursue the occupation as a career. Also frequently reported was the opportunity the experience gave students to gain a better understanding of the industry and the occupation they had chosen. More details of perceived benefits of work experience/vocational placements for students are presented in table 92.

Table 92: Supervisor perceptions of the benefits work experience/vocational placement had for students (n=266)

Perceived benefits	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Work experience/vocational placements allowed students to:			
Experience real workplace environment	102	38.3	19.6
Make decisions about career choice or study options	89	33.5	17.1
Increase understanding of industry or field	56	21.1	10.8
Gain practical experience	44	16.5	8.5
Increase understanding of occupation	43	16.2	8.3
Improve people skills, working or communicating with adults	43	16.2	8.3
Develop work ethic	24	9.0	4.6
Develop confidence	20	7.5	3.8
Develop responsibility, maturity and commitment	19	7.1	3.7
Learn about particular organisation	18	6.8	3.5
Learn discipline, punctuality, time management, accuracy, self- discipline, meet deadlines	18	6.8	3.5
Others: Develop contacts for jobs Learn to ask questions Obtain guidance Some gain a lot, others gain nothing Have a good time Very little or nothing Interview skills Key competencies Self-awareness Appropriate dress Constructive break from school	18	6.8	3.5
Learn about expectations of workplace	13	4.9	2.5
Develop practical skills	8	3.0	1.5
Increase knowledge and ideas	5	1.9	0.01
	520	**195.6**	**100.0**

Almost nine in ten supervisors (89.4%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that work experience/vocational placement allows students to learn about the world of work. Few supervisors did not believe that this occurred. These supervisors were asked to report reasons for their beliefs. The most frequently reported reason was that the work experience/placement did not provide any reliable experience (n=12) and was not long enough for students to learn about the world of work in an effective manner (n=7). Other reasons related to students not being aware of what they wanted to do (n=3) and not being mature enough to undertake the tasks expected of them (n=1).

Perceived benefits for employers and communities

Supervisor survey

Supervisors were asked to indicate whether or not their organisations received any benefits from being involved in providing work experience/vocational placements for students. Almost two-thirds (65.5%) believed that their companies did receive benefits from having students in the workplace.

Company benefits

Supervisors were also asked to describe these benefits. Well over two-thirds of the respondents believed that the benefits related to promoting their organisations within the community and encouraging students into their industries. Well over a third of the companies believed that these helped them to make recruitment decisions. These details are provided in table 93. The vocational placement column indicates those supervisors who had overseen vocational placements. This includes those who had supervised both work experience and vocational placements.

Table 93: Perceived benefits derived by organisation as a result of involvement in providing work experience/vocational placements

Organisational benefits	All supervisors (n=178)		Work experience only (n=125)		Vocational placements (n=53)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
Encourage people into industry	73.0	39.4	70.4	39.3	79.2	39.6
Promotion of organisation	72.5	39.1	72.8	40.6	71.7	35.8
Make recruitment decisions	39.9	21.5	36.0	20.1	49.0	24.5
	185.4	**100.0**	**179.2**	**100.0**	**199.9**	**100.0**

In addition, almost one-tenth (7.8%) of the supervisors noted that students provided help with routine jobs. Other company benefits appear in appendix Z1.

Community benefits

Supervisors reported a range of community benefits derived from their organisations being involved in providing work experience/ vocational placements for students. However, they generally tended to cite benefits received directly by students as having indirect benefits for the community. By far the most frequently identified of these benefits was that the experience allowed students to gain an insight into the occupation of their choice and provided them with opportunities to make decisions about their career directions. At times, this was cited as saving community resources and reducing wastage rates. For example, it would impact on resources if students did not have a clear understanding of the particular occupation they believed they wanted to pursue.

The next most frequently cited community benefit for companies was that involvement in the program allowed them to provide students with experience of 'real' workplaces. Another frequently reported benefit was that it provided companies with an opportunity to fulfill their community obligations.

Table 94: Perceived community benefits for companies providing work experience/vocational placements for students as specified by supervisors (n=240)

Perceived benefit	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Allows student to gain insight into vocation and industry (e.g. clarify goals for future, make appropriate career decisions)	130	54.1	40.1
Provides student with experience of workplace environment (e.g. working others, opportunity to experience range of jobs)	52	21.7	16.0
Provides promotion of a positive image for the company	20	8.3	6.2
Allows company to fulfil community obligations (e.g. helping in education of students, putting something back into the community etc., help prepare youth for workforce, opportunity to demonstrate co-operation and mutual respect, developing employable students)	44	18.3	13.6
Provides student with hands-on experience and skills building (e.g. practical experience, industry experience, demonstrate skills to potential employers)	32	13.3	9.9
Prepares student for real world of working life (e.g. develops work ethics, broadens horizons, exposes student to expectations of workplace, emphasises need for commitment and responsibility, may provide employment, allows student to understand need for respect and good interpersonal relations, develops confidence)	46	19.2	14.2
	324	**134.9**	**100.0**

These were very few companies (5.4%) who reported not being able to see that the community itself derived any major direct benefits from their company providing work experience/vocational placement for students. Of those believing that benefits were derived by schools and students, at least eight companies reported that the community derived considerable value from this involvement. Another five companies indicated that it provided students with some goals to strive for in the future. Table 94 provides a breakdown of community benefits perceived to result from companies offering work experience/vocational placements for students.

Satisfaction with work experience

Student survey

One way to gauge if students feel the exercise is worthwhile is to find out whether they would go on work experience again.

When students were asked this question the great majority of work experience and vocational placement students replied that they would do so. A small proportion of work experience students and slightly more vocational placement students replied that they would not. Just over a tenth of the group could not make up their minds. There were little differences between vocational placement students and work experience students in this regard. These details are presented in table 95.

Table 95: Student willingness to repeat work experience/vocational placements (n=2248)

	Work experience %	Vocational placement %
Willing to repeat the experience	82.2	80.6
Not willing to repeat the experience	5.8	7.5
Not sure	12.0	12.0
	100.0	**100.0**

Students were asked to give reasons for wanting or not wanting to attend work experience. Responses were received from just over three-quarters of the work experience students and about 80 per cent of the vocational placement students.

The most frequent reason given for wanting to attend by both work experience and vocational placement students was that the experience had been an enjoyable and interesting one. (Words like enjoyable, great, interesting, exciting were often used as descriptions.) The next most frequently reported reason given by work experience students for wanting to repeat the experience was that it had been a good and useful one. For vocational education students, the opportunity to experience the real world was the second most frequently reported reason. A total of 235 negative comments were received from students.

The most frequently reported reason for not wanting to repeat the experience was that it had not been beneficial in terms of learning new skills or knowledge. (Words like 'lousy', 'didn't like it', 'didn't learn much', 'pointless' and 'waste of time' were used.)

Table 96 presents the most frequently reported reasons given by work experience and vocational placement students for wanting or not wanting to repeat the experience. In this table, the percentage of cases column is based on the total number of students providing either positive or negative responses to the questions. However, the ranks for positive and negative responses have been allocated separately.

Table 96: Student reasons for wanting or not wanting to attend work experience or vocational placement in the future (n=1899)

	Work experience		Vocational placement		Total group
	No. of cases	Rank order	No. of cases	Rank order	% of cases
Reasons for wanting to repeat the experience					
Prior experience was enjoyable, fun, interesting, exciting	468	1	56	1	27.5
Prior experience had been good, beneficial, helpful, useful or worthwhile	273	2	14	6	15.1
Prior experience provided an opportunity to gain experience in the real world of work	263	3	26	2	15.2
The experience provides opportunities to increase knowledge about oneself and possible careers available	259	4	16	5	14.5
Prior experience allowed the development of industry-specific skills and personal skills (responsibility, maturity, independence, tolerance, patience)	152	5	24	3	9.3
Prior experience provided opportunity to learn a lot	148	6	17	4	8.7
Desire to broaden knowledge of other jobs and workplaces	140	7	8	10	7.8
Experience helps to further future employment opportunities	93	8	14	6	5.6
Experience allowed opportunity to work with supportive co-workers and meet new people	78	9	4	11	4.3
Desire to change career option	62	10	9	8	3.7
Will consider going on work experience again if it is better organised, more relevant or worthwhile	36	11	2	15	2.0
Experience allows opportunity to learn and practice skills not available at school	28	12	3	14	1.6
Prior experience allowed opportunity to work in occupation of their choice	23	13	9	8	1.7

	Work experience		Vocational placement		Total group
	No. of cases	Rank order	No. of cases	Rank order	% of cases
The workplace is better than school	19	14	4	11	1.2
The experience allowed opportunity to work with others and as part of a team	17	15	-	-	0.9
The experience can be included as a résumé item	17	15	-	-	0.9
Further work experience is compulsory and required to complete course	3	16	4	11	0.2
Total positive responses	**2079**		**210**		
Reasons for not wanting to repeat the experience					
The experience was boring, tedious with not enough to do	45	1	6	2	2.6
The work environment was not good (staff not friendly, hours too long)	37	2	5	3	2.2
The experience did not provide much opportunity for learning (pointless, waste of time)	30	3	9	1	2.1
Don't want to miss school/too much school work to catch up on	29	4	2	4	1.6
Further work experience is not required	19	5	2	4	1.1
The work was not what I want as a career	7	6	-	-	0.4
Treated poorly and without pay	6	7	1	5	0.3
Work experience was hard and tiring work with too much to do and too much responsibility	5	8	-	-	0.3
Work experience was too difficult to organise and expensive	3	9	-	-	0.2
School is more fun than work	2	10	-	-	0.2
Was given an unjust report	2	10	-	-	0.2
Not sure of what to expect in another workplace	1	12	-	-	0.1
Total negative responses	**186**		**25**		
	2265		**235**		**131.5**

Although there are slight variations between the reasons given by work experience and vocational placement students, there are overall no significant differences in the rank ordering of the reasons provided by the two groups. This means that both work experience and vocational placement students are evaluating their experience in the workplace in a similar fashion.

Supervisor survey

Supervisors look forward to having students

There is one way to obtain an indication of how work experience/vocational placements are received by employers. This involves asking them to rate the extent to which they look forward to students undertaking work experience/vocational placements in their organisations. Just under half (48.4%) of all respondents in this study indicated that they generally looked forward to it.

Well over half of the supervisors of vocational placements and just under half of those supervising work experience only also reported that they generally looked forward to having students in the workplace. These details are provided in table 97.

Table 97: The extent to which supervisors look forward to having students in workplaces (n=289)

	All supervisors (n=289)	Work experience only (n=216)	Vocational placements (n=73)
	% of responses	% of responses	% of responses
Generally look forward to students coming	48.4	45.4	57.5
Not sure/neutral	33.5	35.2	28.7
Don't look forward to students coming	18.0	19.4	13.7
	100.0	**100.0**	**100.0**

Reasons for negative responses

Supervisors who did not look forward to students coming to do work experience/vocational placements in their organisation were asked to provide reasons for this. The most frequently reported reasons were related to the pressure these placements put on staff workloads and time and company resources. Finding enough and suitable tasks for students to do was another frustration. The amount of supervision required by students and their lack of interest were other concerns. A comprehensive breakdown of reasons for supervisors not looking forward to students coming to the workplace for work experience/vocational placements is presented in table 98.

In addition, a small number of supervisors reported that whether or not they looked forward to students coming into the workplace depended on the quality of the student. Experience with good students encouraged supervisors to look forward to the next lot of students. Experience with bad students had the opposite effect.

Whether or not supervisors look forward to receiving work experience/vocational placement students into their organisations may be an indication of the success of a program. It may also be an indication of the pressures felt by supervisors to get through their normal activities without the added pressure of extra supervisory activities.

Table 98: Reasons given by supervisors for not looking forward to having work experience/vocational placement students (n=74)

Reasons	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Increased pressure on staff workloads time and resources	64	86.4	47.4
Increased requirements for constant supervision of students	11	14.9	8.1
Increased difficulties in locating meaningful tasks for students to perform	13	17.6	9.6
Students are not suited to the workplace or prepared for what is expected	9	12.2	6.7
Students are not interested or motivated to be at the workplace	23	31.1	17.0
There are no real benefits for the company to be involved in these programs	8	10.8	5.9
Others	7	9.5	5.2
	135	**182.5**	**100.0**

Other employees look forward to working with students

Another indication is the willingness of other employees to work with these students. When supervisors were asked whether other employees were willing to work with students, over two-thirds indicated that other employees were generally willing to do so. Very few perceived other workers as generally unwilling to work with students.

Almost three-quarters of the supervisors of work experience only placements and supervisors of vocational placements reported other workers as being willing to work with students. These details are provided in table 99.

Table 99: Supervisor perceptions of employee willingness to work with students

	All supervisors (n=285)	Work experience only (n=213)	Vocational placement (n=72)
Generally willing to work with students	71.6	71.3	72.2
Not sure/neutral	19.3	19.7	18.1
Generally not willing to work with students	9.1	8.9	9.6
	100.0	**100.0**	**100.0**

Reason for negative attitudes of other employees to students

Supervisors who believed that workers were generally unwilling to work with students were asked to explain why this should be so. The most frequent reason given was the time this involvement took away from workers performing their current tasks and work responsibilities. Another frequently reported as a reason was the lack of interest in the workplace shown by students. A breakdown of why other employees may be unwilling to work with students is presented in table 100.

Table 100: Reasons for other employees being unwilling to work with work experience/vocational placement students (n=54)

Reasons	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Takes too much time away from current tasks and responsibilities	34	62.9	51.5
Students are not interested or motivated to do work	16	29.6	24.2
It takes too much time to help student overcome lack of basic skills and teach them correct way of doing things	7	13.0	10.6
Others (e.g. perceived no benefit, supervision difficulties, occupational health and safety dangers, students unsure of expectations of placement, students in workplace for small periods of time, students in workplace far too much time, too much responsibility involved)	9	16.7	13.6
	66	**122.2**	**100.0**

One supervisor was especially concerned that current methods for recording performance could also turn employees away from wanting to work with work experience/vocational placement students. According to this individual, logbooks needed to be streamlined and made simple as the present method was time consuming and discouraged employees from wanting to be involved.

Co-ordinator survey

Co-ordinators provided at least 57 different types of summary observations about the value or otherwise of work experience/vocational placements. The most frequent observations related to the positive outcomes of the program, the acceptance of it by employers and community groups and the positive effects on students. Concerns were raised about future funding, difficulties of placing students with disabilities, transport difficulties for programs in rural areas and the need to make programs easy to administer for employers. Table 101 provides details on frequently reported observations.

Table 101: Co-ordinator summary observations on vocational placement programs (n=84)

	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Program worthwhile, successful and well received (e.g. provides appropriate training, broadens options for students)	53	63.1	44.5
Program has positive effects on students (e.g. skills, school achievement, motivation, self-esteem, confidence, social skills)	23	27.4	19.3
Program requires extra or continued funding to cover cost of resources (e.g. capital equipment, lower course costs, school resources, staff, time, costs of workplace assessor training, transport)	15	17.9	12.6
Finding and organising placements takes substantial amounts of time and effort	8	9.5	6.7
Benefits for employers (training, recruitment)	4	4.8	3.4
Adjustments need to be made to curricula and resource materials (too many outcomes, special resource materials for rural towns, too many requirements))	4	4.8	3.4
Success requires school and industry support	3	3.6	2.5
Lack of training for key players (co-ordinator, supervisors, employers)	3	3.6	2.5
Others	6	7.1	5.0
	119	**141.8**	**100.0**

Discussion

Information from students and employers reveals the tasks that students performed in their workplaces, the skills they learnt and the knowledge they gained.

What students learnt

Students reported learning to perform a range of different skills and tasks during their work experience/vocational placements. Few students reported having learnt not much, nothing new or very little. Very few students provided examples of having learnt to perform any housekeeping or cleaning tasks.

This information gives an insight into what students did during their time in workplaces. It also provides evidence that workplaces are committed to giving students considerable knowledge and understanding of their particular industries and organisations. In addition, they engage students in basic technical, personal and interpersonal skill development.

It is surprising that although most students do not believe the skills they acquired in the workplace could be learnt at school, there is still a small group who believe that this could be achieved. This is even more apparent among vocational placement students. These opinions may reflect the more thorough preparation of vocational placement students, and the availability to them of facilities and resources within the school. It could also reflect the types of things they had to do during their time in the workplace.

If students perceive that they could have acquired the skills they learnt in the workplace just as well at school, they may begin to doubt the value of going into the workplace. Teachers may need to explain that the purpose of going into workplaces is to obtain real-world practice of the skills they learn about in school. In this way, students will understand that although the skills they learn in the two places may be similar, there is no substitute for learning or practising skills on the job.

What employers expected

Information from employers shows that they are keen to allow students to perform tasks which will give them first-hand experience of occupations and industries. Students were also expected to do their share of general housekeeping tasks and basic clerical tasks such as filing records, handling mail and photocopying. Few employers expected students to spend all their time observing activities rather than undertaking practical tasks. This is further evidence that employers are genuinely trying to do their part to provide students with a worthwhile experience of the workplace.

Perceived benefits

Students

Students were also asked to report the value to them of learning skills in the workplace. Once again, there were few students who did not provide a positive evaluation and substantial numbers of students enjoyed the experience and found it worthwhile.

Students believed that the skills they learnt in the workplace provided them with definite benefits. These included knowledge and skill which would help them in their future employment and an understanding of the occupation or industry they had chosen and their suitability for it. Substantial numbers of students referred to technical skills they had learnt on the job and the development of interpersonal skills. It is interesting to note that students also make particular reference to how they had improved their confidence in themselves and in dealing with others, their patience and tolerance for colleagues and supervisors, and their ability to cope with pressure.

These findings are based on student self-report. That is, students volunteered the information in response to a question asking them to reflect on the value of the skills they had learnt in the workplace.

Students were also asked whether or not they would repeat the experience. The great majority of students were only too happy to do so. Once again, their reasons for doing this provide an indication that their experience in the workplace had been interesting and rewarding. Students alluded to the knowledge they had gained and the skills they had developed as major reasons for wanting to attend work experience again.

There were very few students who did not wish to repeat the exercise. Reasons given for students in these cases related to lack of things to do at the workplace and absence of learning, the poor work environment and the need to catch up on school work when the experience was over.

Although almost half of the students did not identify any school-related benefits that resulted from things they did in the workplace, there were substantial numbers of students who were able to do so. In the main, they reported improvements in their abilities to deal with others and an increased sense of maturity, responsibility and ability to get things done. Increased technical skills and course-related knowledge were also identified.

This further supports the value to students of being involved in work experience/vocational placement programs. Information on the immediate benefits that can accrue to students can be used to encourage employers to make their workplaces available for students.

Employers

Asking employers whether or not they looked forward to students coming into the workplace also provides information of how programs were received. Just under half of the supervisors in this study indicated they looked forward to having work experience students in the workplace. This proportion grew to well over half when supervisors were responsible for vocational placement students.

Supervisors who did not look forward to students coming into the workplace were asked to provide reasons for their responses. Reasons given related to the added pressures such programs placed on staff and time. These pressures were even more dramatic when students were felt to be unsuited to the workplace. At the same time, almost three-quarters of these supervisors indicated that other workers were generally willing to work with students.

Whether the supervisor looked forward or did not look forward to students coming into the workplace did not actually influence the type of experience students would have. Supervisors may have been more concerned about how extra duties may overburden their staff when they responded to the question. It is more informative, then, to look at how they believe other workers in their companies treated students. If other workers are, in the main, willing to work with students, then to some extent we can say that it is evidence of a work environment which is willing to accept students and work with them to increase their knowledge and skills.

That work experience and vocational programs provide some benefits to companies was also reported by supervisors in this study. Almost three-quarters of the supervisors in this study believed that companies could use these programs to promote their organisations and encourage students into their industries. Also important was the opportunity for the company to fulfill its obligation to the community by providing learning opportunities for students. In addition, substantial numbers believed it helped them make recruitment decisions. What was interesting is that almost one-tenth of the supervisors in this study pointed to the fact that students in the workplace meant another pair of hands on the job floor.

As well as providing companies with definite benefits, employers believed that work experience/vocational placements allowed students to experience the world of work. It also allowed them to find out what they wanted to do and develop skills and attributes that they would require when they went into the workforce.

Co-ordinators

The overwhelming majority of co-ordinators rated vocational placements very or extremely valuable in terms of student outcomes. In summing up, substantial numbers of co-ordinators reported on how well the program was received by employers and students and the positive effects it had on student achievement and the development of personal skills.

Improving the placements

Suggestions for improvement

Student survey

When students were asked to indicate how their experience in the workplace could be improved, almost half (46.4%) of the work experience students and vocational placement students (42.9%) replied that it did not need improvement. The most frequently reported suggestion for improvement was for students to have more meaningful things to do at work. This was the case for both work experience and vocational placement students.

Data on the number of students making these suggestions appear in table 102.

Table 102: Student suggestions for improvement

	Work experience (n=980)		Vocational placements (n=125)	
	% of cases	% of responses	% of cases	% of responses
More meaningful things to do at work	72.0	48.9	67.2	38.2
More preparation of supervisors	29.1	19.8	36.0	20.4
Better co-ordination between school and workplace	17.3	11.8	28.0	15.9
Better preparation of student	16.6	11.3	23.2	13.2
More visits from workplace co-ordinators	12.2	8.3	21.6	12.2
	147.2	**100.0**	**176.0**	**100.0**

In addition, other frequently raised suggestions included: having more time in the workplace (n=12); having more variety of jobs in the workplace (n=11); having a better choice of work placement (n=8); and changing the time of the workplace to coincide with less busy times of the year or more busy times of the year (n=6).

Teacher survey

Teachers were also asked to indicate how the programs could be improved. For work experience placements, the most frequently identified suggestion for improvement was for students to be given more meaningful things to do at work, closely followed by better preparation of workplace supervisors. A breakdown of these data are presented in table 103.

Table 103: Teacher suggestions for program improvement

Suggestions	Number of teachers			
	Work experience (n=35)		Vocational placements (n=18)	
	% of cases	*% of responses*	*% of cases*	*% of responses*
Better co-ordination between school and workplace	48.6	22.1	66.7	27.9
More preparation of workplace supervisor	42.9	19.5	61.1	25.6
Student given more meaningful things to do at work	65.7	29.9	44.4	18.6
Better preparation of students	42.9	19.5	38.9	16.3
More visits to students by co-ordinators	20.0	9.1	27.8	11.6
	220.1	**100.0**	**238.9**	**100.0**

Supervisor survey

Supervisors who had concerns about the work experience and vocational placement programs were asked to provide suggestions as to how these could be made more effective. The most frequent single suggestions for improvement concerned improved planning activities and adding more structure to the program.

Table 104 provides a breakdown of supervisor suggestions for the improvement of work experience/vocational placements.

Table 104: Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of work experience/ vocational placements (n=41)

Suggestions	No. of cases	% of cases	% of responses
Add more structure to the program (e.g. set specific goals and objectives, introduce competency-based training, provide feedback to staff, involve supervisors in checking learning)	10	24.4	23.3
Improve preparation and co-ordination activities (e.g. provide more details on students, setting of goals, increase company input to selection, improve timing of placements, improve co-ordination between school and employer, clarify student expectations, provide more lead-up time for businesses, improve skills training, have students visit supervisors with list of objectives prior to placement, teachers or co-ordinators to visit workplace)	9	22.0	20.9
Improve match between student career aspirations and workplace (e.g. give student time to find places, adopt competitive selection practices)	6	14.6	14.0
Increase the length and number of blocks of time students spend in the workplace to improve opportunity for skill development	6	14.6	14.0
Increase assistance to the company (e.g. financial assistance, time, staff, resources, more supervisors with time available)	3	7.3	7.0
Increase selection of more mature students (e.g. Year 12 only, Year 11 or 12, not Year 10)	3	7.3	7.0
Others (e.g. can't improve it, improve confidence of students, don't include students who are not genuinely interested in work experience, improve attitude of students, keep procedures simple)	6	14.6	14.0
	43	**104.8**	**100.0**

Discussion

Improving the experience

Almost half of all work experience and vocational placement students are happy to leave things as they are. Others would like more meaningful things to do at work, and supervisors who have been better prepared for their roles. Vocational placement students are also interested in having increased visits from workplace co-ordinators and better liaison between school and the workplace.

Having more meaningful things to do at work is a recurring theme with a small group of students in this study. What the students understand by the term 'meaningful' is less clear. It may be that they believe workplaces to be more complex than they actually are and that people at all levels are not involved in basic simple tasks to keep the organisation functioning. If this is so, it is important for teachers to prepare students by providing more realistic details of what they can expect to be involved in.

It is also important for those who organise placement programs to provide supervisors with enough lead time to allow them to think about, define and prepare the tasks that students will be expected to do when they arrive in the workplace. In addition, they may need to be given more detailed information on what it is that students would like to do. This information can assist employers to judge better the extent to which they have the capacity to deliver skills. They can then spend time identifying tasks which may allow students to gain the desired experience. If students have an unrealistic idea of their own skills and of what they can expect to do in the workplace, this may need to be pointed out to them.

It may be more difficult for teachers to deal with the frustration experienced by students and employers in those professions in which it is difficult to give students appropriate exposure to or practice in professional activities. In these cases, it may be possible for representatives from professional associations to meet with teachers. Together, they can identify a set of basic tasks performed by professionals that can be done by students on work experience. For example, students who want to become pharmacists could be given tasks like locating particular medicines that pharmacists are to use in preparing prescriptions and being close by while these are being prepared. In this way, students get a better feel for the occupation and do not get frustrated at not having meaningful activities to perform.

Teachers and co-ordinators can assist supervisors to prepare for students by either calling on supervisors to remind them of dates and expectations or sending out reminder notices. Alternatively, they may ask students to follow the example of students in this study who were expected to call employers a week before they were intended to commence the work experience.

Major conclusions and policy implications

Overview

This study has confirmed the importance of work experience/vocational placement programs in assisting students to prepare for eventual entry into the workforce. It provides a snapshot of the various activities students, co-ordinators, teachers and workplace supervisors undertake to carry out their respective roles. It takes account of the benefits perceived by students, co-ordinators and employers to be derived by students and employers from their participation in workplace training programs and presents some alternatives for improvement of the programs. In addition, it provides information on what students do in workplaces and what attributes and skills supervisors consider essential for students to demonstrate in the workplace.

Support for continuation of work experience/ vocational placements

The findings of this study provide support for the results of other research and evaluation studies relating to the benefits derived by students from work experience vocational placements. In so doing, they provide further support for the continuation of these programs for secondary school students.

From this study, it is evident that participation in work experience/vocational placements provided students with increased knowledge and understanding of the real world of work and of the industries and occupations they had chosen to experience. It made it possible for them to decide how well they fitted in this world and whether or not they would follow it as a career.

As well as developing varying levels of industry-specific skills, students were also able to experience working with others as part of a work group. It allowed them to experience responsibility and develop increased confidence in their own abilities. There was little indication that the experience allowed students to develop cognitive skills to any great extent. However, supervisors provide ample evidence that students have learnt to adapt to the routines of work and the requirements for developing harmonious and co-operative relationships with others. In addition, having students in workplaces also made it possible for employers to fulfill what they perceived as a community obligation and to select students for eventual recruitment.

Positive support for the benefits of participation in work experience/vocational placements was received from students, co-ordinators and workplace supervisors. This underscores the value of continuing these programs and encouraging increased participation among employers and students.

Policy implication:

Continuation of the present policy of involving students in work experience/vocational placements will extend the benefits students and employers presently derive from participation in these programs.

Raising the image of the trades and of new and emerging industries

Only a small percentage of students aspire to following career directions in the traditional trades or what have been termed the new and emerging growth industries. This provides a dilemma for agencies providing support to vocational placements in these areas and industries experiencing skill shortages in the workplace. If students are not choosing the trades or occupation in the growth or emerging industries, then it is important to investigate the reasons for this. It may also mean that industry bodies need to develop a strategy to win the hearts and minds of parents and students by pointing out the value of entering these occupations. It may also require strategies to improve their image. An effective starting point may be to change the perception among parents, students and teachers that the trades are a place for students who don't have the cognitive skill or ability to do anything else.

Policy implications:

1 Strategies are required to encourage students to choose careers in the trades and emerging and growth industries.

2 Resources should be allocated to industry to mount promotional campaigns and develop and distribute materials to raise the image of the trades in the eyes of parents and students.

Preparing and training workplace supervisors

Students identified other workers and supervisors as having the major impact on their learning. Nevertheless, there is little indication that these supervisors or workers have been involved in any specific training for this role.

There is a feeling among workplace supervisors that those who are responsible for training students in the workplace are generally adequately experienced to carry out this supervisory role. However, there is a need to ensure that these individuals are provided with adequate information about the specific objectives of the program. It is important to involve supervisors and other workers in planning appropriate activities which will help the achievement of these objectives. In addition, it will strengthen the commitment of employers and their workers to these programs, and make it easier for students to be integrated into work groups.

Policy implication:

Strategies are needed to make it easy for schools to provide workplace supervisors and workers involved in training students with the necessary information they require to provide effective workplace training.

Mechanisms for finding willing and appropriate workplaces

Finding appropriate placements and enough of them was a major frustration for co-ordinators. This was compounded in the case of co-ordinators in rural and country areas, where transport of students and access to larger companies and those providing different specialist skills was a problem. In addition, the over-use of the same employers also caused problems. As a result, there is an increasing need for the implementation of mechanisms to co-ordinate the times at which schools approach employers for placements. In addition to making it easier for co-ordinators to find appropriate placements, it will help employers to plan work experience/vocational placements around their own work schedules. This will ensure that they can allocate adequate resources and time to students.

Finding employers willing to take students was especially difficult for co-ordinators of programs involving students with disabilities. The reasons for this may need to be investigated. Employers may have a perception that occupational health and safety issues will arise from having these students in their companies. It may also be the case that employers have not been helped to identify certain activities that such students can be involved in. Consultations between industry bodies and schools to identify the types of companies which can provide appropriate skills training for these students is required to make it easier for them to access placements.

Policy implications:

1 Mechanisms should be developed to support local co-ordination of work experience/vocational placements between schools and other providers.

2 Resources should be allocated to encourage employers to become involved in providing placements for students with disabilities.

Removing duplication of assessment activities

The findings of the study show that substantial numbers of students are often assessed in the workplace and at school. This is especially the case for vocational placement students. Although the classroom may be the best place for assessing theoretical knowledge in particular fields of study, it is important that schools do not duplicate what may be happening in the workplace. This means that schools, workplaces and curriculum bodies will need to work out which skills are best assessed in the workplace and which in the classroom. Involving supervisors and teachers in the determination of these boundaries will ensure that duplication is avoided.

Policy implication:

Consultation mechanisms should be set up to decide which areas of curriculum are best assessed in the workplace and which areas are best assessed in the classroom. This will help eliminate duplication of effort.

Involving industry in the streamlining of assessment materials

Supervisors in this study were generally satisfied with the recording methods used by schools with which they were involved. However, their suggestions for improving assessment procedures show that developing recording materials which are easy to use and make sense in the workplace is especially important (logbooks, checklists, etc.). They can help supervisors provide more accurate and informative records of student performance.

Streamlining assessment materials may require co-ordinators and teachers to meet with local employers or their representatives. They can then discuss how logbooks, checklists or other methods can best be modified to capture the information that is required. It is also important that these materials be written in clear and concise language, and are not overly burdensome in terms of complexity or time.

Policy implication:

Strategies are needed to encourage schools to increase consultations with local employers or their representatives about the requirements of assessment materials.

Reducing costs of assessor and supervisor training

Supervisors of vocational placement students are generally involved in the assessment of performance in major ways. It is evident from the supervisor and co-ordinator surveys that few have had the required assessor training. For some programs, this precludes employer participation in the delivery of vocational placements or requires that teachers take the assessor role.

If the assessing of industry-specific skills is only to be conducted by accredited assessors—and information from co-ordinators suggests that these are difficult to find—then it is important that workplaces are able to easily access the training required. One way to reduce costs may be to provide subsidies to providers of assessor training so that they are able to offer training but not be out of pocket. This may mean reducing the costs of the training for employers so that it is more affordable, or reducing the amount of time to be spent in training so that it is more manageable. One way to reduce time spent in training is to ensure that the training covers only the essential components; that is, requisite procedures which must be followed to derive an accurate and reliable assessment.

Policy implication:

Develop more efficient ways to provide assessor training.

Recognising the contribution of employers and their workers

The majority of supervisors generally look forward to students coming into the workplace. They also believe that other workers are generally willing to work with students. This positive climate augurs well for the introduction of students into already established work groups, and for the development of student skill and expertise. It is important then to recognise this goodwill by ensuring that students are prepared to learn as much as possible from their time in the workplace, and that they are prepared to do their share of the work.

This study has also shown that employers are ready to provide placements out of a sense of community obligation to improve the employability of students. It is, therefore, important to reward this goodwill by providing employers with community recognition for their involvement. This could take the form of financial assistance to cover administration expenses (postage, telephone, etc.) or reducing the costs of supervisor or assessor training. This will have two advantages. Supervisors will be better prepared for the formal assessment duties, and co-ordinators will find it easier to access placements with recognised trainers and assessors in place. In addition, subsidies for management fees paid to programs which have vocational placement components can also make it easier for employers to be involved.

Furthermore, public recognition in the local media may also provide rewards for employer goodwill. This may help cement the relationships between local employers and schools as well as providing free advertising for their companies.

Policy implications:

1. Encourage schools and industry associations to put in place mechanisms to recognise the goodwill of employers.
2. Extend the provision of training to supervisors and other workers.
3. Encourage schools to implement training or information sessions which focus on students needing to do their best to meet employer expectations while they are in workplaces.

Ensuring students have access to meaningful things to do

Only a small percentage of students learnt nothing, nothing new or not much during their time in the workplace. However, those students who had chosen professional careers like doctors, veterinary surgeons, lawyers, pharmacists, etc. were more likely to complain about being involved in observational tasks and tasks which were not indicative of what professionals do. There is little that can be done to allow students to undertake tasks that they are not qualified for. However, there needs to be some identification of tasks that these students could perform which are more than observational and different from clerical work. Consultations between professional associations and schools can help to identify professional tasks that lawyers, doctors, veterinary surgeons, pharmacists, etc. must do, in which they can be assisted by work experience students.

Policy implication:

Implement a mechanism for the identification of meaningful 'professional' tasks which students can either be expected to perform or assist in during work experience.

Integrating time for work experience/vocational placements into school timetables

It is evident that the majority of students who choose to undertake vocational placements will either have to miss 'fun' type activities or catch up on work when they get back to school. Although this study did not aim to find out why students do not undertake vocational placements, the perception that it may mean catching up on 'missed' class work may deter the taking up of these options. It may also signal to students that these programs are not considered to be mainstream. It is important, then, to emphasise the need for schools to adopt flexible timetabling or individual timetabling mechanisms to integrate time for workplace learning into the regular curriculum. In this way, students may be less likely to resist taking vocational courses because they are not prepared to do the extra work required to catch up on other subjects.

Policy implication:

Encourage schools to implement timetabling mechanisms which ensure that students do not miss out on regular class activities because of subject choice.

Preparing students for work experience/vocational placements

It is also clear that the majority of students are being provided with adequate training and preparation for their time in the workplace. However, there are still some students who feel they would benefit from industry-specific training prior to going into the workplace. Although acceding to this request may improve the confidence of students going into the workplace, it could be counter-effective in that teachers may provide students with conflicting information or practice. It is important, then, for teachers to be aware of current practices before these types of activities are put into place. Teachers could do this by visiting workplaces or arranging for students to attend a preparation clinic at the workplace. Supervisors would then give students some experience to help them prepare for the formal work experience/vocational placement.

Policy implication:

Resources should be provided for teachers to gain information on the types of activities and machinery students will be using to help prepare them for the workplace.

Increasing assistance for co-ordinators

Substantial numbers of co-ordinators requested additional funding to help them improve the effectiveness of programs. These funds could be allocated to ensure that they either get help in recruiting employers or finalising administrative arrangements once students and employers have been matched. In addition, it would assist co-ordinators to have regular meetings with peers and representatives of funding bodies to ensure that things are going smoothly. Regular workshops, meetings or conferences could be useful in two major ways. They can help funding bodies obtain information on how the programs are progressing and assist co-ordinators by providing them with a forum to discuss problems. This would also provide an opportunity to meet peers and learn about different methods for arranging and monitoring work experience/vocational placements that have been effective for others.

Policy implication:

Resources should be allocated to provide co-ordinators with opportunities to attend regular workshops, conferences or meetings to discuss problems and learn about mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of their programs.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Student questionnaire

Student questionnaire

Work experience and structured work experience arrangements for Years 10, 11 and 12 students

- This questionnaire asks you to think about the time you have spent in a workplace this year and to answer some questions about what you have learned as a result of the experience.
- Work experience and structured work experience are two ways you can spend time in a workplace. Both have different requirements and features.

1. **Work experience**	2. **Structured work experience**
• is part of your general school education	• is a specific requirement of a particular course *(eg. hospitality, building)*
• involves you participating in general workplace activities	• is part of a formal school/ industry program *(eg. TRAC/E Team)*
• is not formally assessed in the workplace	• involves you participating in structured on-the-job training
	• is formally assessed in the workplace

- Keep these points in mind when you select the type of workplace experience you have been involved in.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the prepaid envelope provided within 7 days.

Your name .... **School** ....
(please print) (please print)

Please use a circle to indicate your answer where required.

1. **Gender**
Female 1
Male 2

2. **Year level**
Year 10 1
Year 11 2
Year 12 3
Year 13 4

3. **What type of workplace experience have you been involved in 1996?** *(Refer to instructions on covering page)*
Work experience 1
Structured work experience 2
→ Name of program/course type *(eg. TRAC/E Team, hospitality)* ________________________
Other *(please specify)* ________________

If you have done both general work experience and structured work experience please answer all the remaining questions in terms of the structured work experience.

4. **Name the organisation and suburb where you had this workplace experience/structured work experience** ________________________

5. **Who chose the work experience/structured work experience?**
(please circle as many as apply)
Myself .... 1 *(Go to Q8)*
Parent .... 2 *(Go to Q6)*
Teacher .... 3 *(Go to Q6)*
Workplace coordinator .... 4 *(Go to Q6)*
Other *(please specify)* ________________

6. **If you did not choose the placement, did you have a say in where you would do your work experience/structured work experience?**
Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q8)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q7)*

7. **If no, would you have liked to?**
Yes 1
No 2
Didn't care 3

8. **Briefly describe what your role was in getting the work experience/structured work experience organised.**

____

____

____

____

9. **How many days in total did you spend in the workplace?** ____________ **days**

10. **How was this time organised?**

(please circle one only)

1 week block only 1
1 day a week throughout the term 2
2 week blocks only 3
Other *(please specify)* ____________

11. **Was this an appropriate way to organise the time you spent in the workplace?**

(please circle one only)

Very appropriate .... 5 *(Go to Q14)*
Appropriate .... 4 *(Go to Q14)*
Not sure .... 3 *(Go to Q14)*
Inappropriate .... 2 *(Go to Q13)*
Very inappropriate .... 1 *(Go to Q13)*

12. **Why did you feel this was an inappropriate way to break up the time you spent in the workplace?**

____

____

____

____

13. **Is work experience/structured work experience a compulsory part of your school program?**

Yes 1
No 2

14. **What are the consequences of students choosing not to participate in work experience/ structured work experience?**

(please circle as many as apply)

Don't complete the course 1
Don't graduate 2
Can't take up leadership positions ... 3
No consequences 4
Other *(please specify)* ____________

15. **Whose responsibility was it to let your subject teachers know that you would not be at school during your work experience/structured work experience?**

Me 1
Workplace coordinator 2
Other *(please specify)* ____________

16. **Does your year level do work experience/ structured work experience at the same time?**

Yes 1
No 2

17. **What occupation were you hoping to learn more about during your work experience/structured work experience?** ____________

18. BEFORE work experience/structured work experience

This question asks you to think about what you were HOPING TO GAIN from the work experience/structured work experience BEFORE you went on the placement?
(please circle only one number to show how far you agree or disagree with the statements)

I wanted the work experience/ structured work experience to:	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral/ Not sure**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Help me to find out if it is the type of job I really want	1	2	3	4	5
Help me decide what subjects I should do next year	1	2	3	4	5
Help me decide what course I should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Help me decide what apprenticeship/ traineeship I should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Give me an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Give me an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Help me find out what sort of skills I will need for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Provide me with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Give me the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Give me a better understanding of my employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Give me more confidence in my ability	1	2	3	4	5
Make me better informed about what career choices are available	1	2	3	4	5

19. AFTER work experience/structured work experience

This question asks you to think about what you ACTUALLY GAINED from the work experience/ structured work experience? *(please circle only one number to show how far you agree or disagree with the statements)*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Working in the organisation:					
Helped me to find out if it is the type of job I really want	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me decide what subjects I should do next year	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me decide what course I should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me decide what apprenticeship/ traineeship I should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Gave me an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Gave me an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me find out what sort of skills I will need for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Provided me with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Gave me the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Gave me a better understanding of my employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Gave me more confidence in my ability	1	2	3	4	5
Made me better informed about what career choices are available	1	2	3	4	5

20. Overall rate the extent to which the experience met your expectations?

(please circle one number only)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Not sure		To a great extent

21. If you believe that the work experience/structured work experience did not meet your expectations please tell us why it did not do so? *(please specify)*

22. Were you given a list of things to do in the workplace before you started your work experience/structured work experience?

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q23)*

No .... 2 *(Go to Q24)*

23. If yes, what tasks were you allocated? *(please specify)*

24. What specific workplace training did you receive prior to the work experience/ structured work experience?

(please circle as many as apply)

Occupational health and safety 1

Sexual harassment 2

Employer expectations........................... 3

Working conditions.................................. 4

Legal requirements 5

Communication 6

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

25. Which of these were most helpful to you during your experience? *(please specify)*

26. **What other training, if any, would you have liked?** *(please specify)*

27. **What did you learn to do during your time in work experience/structured work experience?** *(please specify)*

28. **In your opinion what was the value of learning these skills?** *(please specify)*

29. **Who was responsible for teaching you the skills you learnt in the workplace?**

(please circle as many as apply)

Supervisor	1
Manager	2
Other workers	3
Other student/s at the company	4
Myself	5

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

30. **Could you have learnt these skills at school?**

(please circle one only)

Yes	1
No	2
Maybe	3
Not sure	4

31. **Was there anything that you did during your work experience/structured work experience which you have found helpful now that you are back at school?** *(please specify)*

32. **What activities were provided at school following the work experience/structured work experience?**

(please circle as many as apply)

We discussed the skills that we learnt at work 1
We wrote a report on our experiences 2
We gave a presentation on our experience 3
We answered questions 4
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

33. **How could the experience be improved?**

(please circle as many as apply)

More preparation of workplace supervisor 1
I could have been better prepared 2
More meaningful things to do at work 3
More visits from workplace coordinator 4
More/better coordination between school and the workplace ... 5
Does not need to be improved 6
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

34. **How was your performance in the workplace recorded?**

(please circle as many as apply)

Supervisor filled in a checklist/marking of activities I had to complete 1
Supervisor wrote a report on what I had done 2
I kept a logbook of my activities 3
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

35. **Were you given an assessment of your performance?**

Yes 1
No 2

36. **Who assessed your performance?**

(please circle as many as apply)

Workplace supervisor 1
Manager 2
A senior worker 3
Teacher from school 4
Teacher from TAFE college 5
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

37. **Where were you assessed?**

(please circle one only)

In the workplace 1
At school 2
Both 3
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

38. **Would you go on work experience/structured work experience again?**

(please circle one only)

Yes 1
No 2
Not sure 3

39. Please explain why you would or would not go on work experience/structured work experience again?

40. Are you planning to follow this occupation as a career path?

Yes 1
No 2

41. Have you been offered any of the following as a result of your work experience/structured work experience?

(please circle as many as apply)

Full-time employment 1
Part-time employment 2
An apprenticeship 3
A traineeship 4
More work experience 5
Other *(please specify)* ______________

42. Did you accept the offer?

Yes 1
No 2

43. Do you have a part-time job?

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q44)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q47)*

44. Name the organisation where you are employed on a part-time basis. ______________

45. What are the main tasks you are required to perform in your part-time job? *(please specify)*

46. Are you hoping to make your part-time job a career?

Yes 1
No 2

47. Please make any general comments regarding aspects of your work experience/structured work experience.

Thank you for your co-operation!

Appendix B: Work experience and vocational placement co-ordinator questionnaire

Work experience and vocational placement co-ordinator questionnaire

Work experience and vocational placement arrangements for Years 10, 11 and 12 students

Dear coordinator

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is currently conducting a research project into the best practice features of work experience and vocational placement programs for years 10, 11 and 12 students in public and private schools.

Students, coordinators of these programs and employers are being asked to provide information for the project.

Information regarding your experience of these programs will be especially useful to us and accordingly we would appreciate your input.

We have chosen the following definitions to help students distinguish between the two types of programs.

1. Work experience

- is part of your general school education
- involves you participating in general workplace activities
- is not formally assessed in the workplace

2. Vocational placement

- is a specific requirement of a particular course *(eg. hospitality, building)*
- is part of a formal school/ industry program *(eg. TRAC/E Team)*
- involves you participating in structured on-the-job training
- is formally assessed in the workplace

Please complete this questionnaire and return it to us within 7 days in the reply paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your cooperation

Work experience and vocational placement co-ordinator questionnaire

Work experience and vocational placement arrangements for Years 10, 11 and 12 students

Name.. **School**..

Program description and organisation

1. **What type of workplace learning programs has your school been involved in this year?**

Work experience 1

Vocational placement 2

→Name of program/course type *(eg. TRAC/E team/hospitality)*

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

2. **In which of the following years do students at your school participate in compulsory work experience/vocational placement?**

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Year 10	1	Year 10	1
Year 11	2	Year 11	2
Year 12	3	Year 12	3
Year 13	4	Year 13	4

3. **How is this time organised?**

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
1 week block only	1	1 week block only	1
1 day a week throughout the term	2	1 day a week throughout the term	2
2 week blocks only	3	2 week blocks only	3
Other *(please specify)* ____________________		Other *(please specify)* ____________________	

4. **How appropriate is this time allocation for organising this work experience/vocational placement?**

Work experience *(please circle one only)*		**Vocational placement** *(please circle one only)*	
Very appropriate	5 *(Go to Q6)*	Very appropriate	5 *(Go to Q6)*
Appropriate	4 *(Go to Q6)*	Appropriate	4 *(Go to Q6)*
Not sure/neutral	3 *(Go to Q6)*	Not sure/neutral	3 *(Go to Q6)*
Inappropriate	2 *(Go to Q5)*	Inappropriate	2 *(Go to Q5)*
Very inappropriate	1 *(Go to Q5)*	Very inappropriate	1 *(Go to Q5)*

5. **Why do you feel this is an inappropriate way to organise the time students spend in the workplace?** *(please specify)*

____

____

____

____

6. **How many of the courses/programs which have a vocational placement component are accredited?** *(Please specify number and course names)*

7. **Is general work experience a compulsory part of your school program?**

Yes	1
No	2

8. **What are the consequences of students choosing not to participate in compulsory work experience?**

(please circle one only)

Don't complete course	1
Don't graduate	2
Can't take up leadership positions	3
No consequences	4

Other *(please specify)*

9. **How are school timetables made sufficiently flexible to enable students to participate in work experience/vocational placement without missing out on any new classes?** *(please specify)*

Work experience	**Vocational placement**

Selection and coordination

10. **Who decides which organisation the student will go to?**

Student	1
Workplace coordinator	2
Workplace supervisor	3

Other *(please specify)*

11. **What criteria must employers satisfy before being selected to have students from your school?**

12. Briefly describe what is the student's role in getting the work experience/vocational placement organised.

Work experience	Vocational placement

13. Briefly describe your role in getting the work experience/vocational placement organised.

Work experience	Vocational placement

14. Briefly describe the employer's role in getting the work experience/vocational placement organised.

Work experience	Vocational placement

15. What problems have you experienced in finding appropriate workplace sites for students?

Work experience	Vocational placement

16. How do you liaise with workplace supervisors? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		Vocational placement	
Meeting(s) before placement	1	Meeting(s) before placement	1
Regular meetings during placement	2	Regular meetings during placement	2
Telephone conversations when necessary	3	Telephone conversations when necessary	3
Written feedback from supervisor via student during placement	4	Written feedback from supervisor via student during placement	4
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

17. What follow-up activities are provided at school following the work experience/vocational placement? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		Vocational placement	
Students discuss skills learnt at work in class	1	Students discuss skills learnt at work in class	1
Students write a report on their experiences	2	Students write a report on their experiences	2
Students give a presentation of their experience in class	3	Students give a presentation of their experience in class	3
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

Assistance and preparation

18. What assistance does the employer/workplace supervisor receive for providing work experience/ vocational placement? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		Vocational placement	
Financial assistance	1	Financial assistance	1
Assistance from school staff	2	Assistance from school staff	2
Assessment/recording materials	3	Assessment/recording materials	3
No assistance provided	4	No assistance provided	4
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

19. What assistance do you as the workplace coordinator receive? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		Vocational placement	
Financial assistance	1	Financial assistance	1
Industry assistance	2	Industry assistance	2
Assistance from other school staff	3	Assistance from other school staff	3
Training	4	Training	4
No assistance provided	5	No assistance provided	5
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

20. What assistance would you require to make your program more effective? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		Vocational placement	
Additional funding	1	Additional funding	1
Additional staff	2	Additional staff	2
Training	3	Training	3
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

21. What training have you received for carrying out this role? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience

I was given training in:

How to liaise with employers 1

How to obtain work experience placements 2

How to market the program 3

How to monitor the quality of the work experience 4

***I was not given any training* 5**

Other *(please specify)* ____________

Vocational placements

I was given training in:

How to liaise with employers 1

How to obtain vocational placements 2

How to market the program 3

How to monitor the quality of the vocational placement 4

***I was not given any training* 5**

Other *(please specify)* ____________

22. How successful was this training?

Work experience *(please circle one only)*

Very successful 5

Successful 4

Not sure/neutral 3

Not successful 2

Not at all successful 1

Vocational placement *(please circle one only)*

Very successful 5

Successful 4

Not sure/neutral 3

Not successful 2

Not at all successful 1

23a. Do students receive any training before going out to the workplace?

Work experience

Yes 1

No 2

If yes, what does it include?

Vocational placement

Yes 1

No 2

If yes, what does it include?

23b. Do teachers of courses with work experience/vocational placement components receive any training prior to students going out on these placements?

Work experience

Yes 1

No 2

If yes, what does it include?

Vocational placement

Yes 1

No 2

If yes, what does it include?

23c. Do workplace supervisors receive any training prior to having students on work experience/ vocational placements?

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Yes	1	Yes	1
No	2	No	2
If yes, what does it include?		**If yes, what does it include?**	

24. What type of advice are employers/supervisors provided with regarding the purpose and structure of the program? *(please specify)*

25. Are students expected to prepare for work experience/vocational placement?

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Yes	1	Yes	1
No	2	No	2

26. If yes, what are students advised to do? *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Contact workplace supervisor	1	Contact workplace supervisor	1
Find out about the organisation	2	Find out about the organisation	2
Discuss employer expectations	3	Discuss employer expectations	3
Discuss expected outcomes	4	Discuss program/course requirements	4
Other *(please specify)* ______		Discuss expected outcomes	5
		Other *(please specify)* ______	

27. Are parents informed about the nature of the work experience/vocational placement?

Work experience		**Vocational placement program(s)**	
Yes	1	Yes	1
No	2	No	2

28. Do students go into the workplace with a specific list of tasks they are expected to achieve?

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Yes	1	Yes	1
No	2	No	2

29. **Who specifies the tasks students are expected to achieve?** *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Workplace coordinator	1	Workplace coordinator	1
Employer/supervisor	2	Employer/supervisor	2
Both	3	Both	3
Determined by the curriculum	4	Determined by the curriculum	4
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

30. **To what extent is the workplace expected to meet these specifications?**

Work experience *(please circle one only)*		**Vocational placement** *(please circle one only)*	
Must meet all specifications	4	Must meet all specifications	4
Meet specifications as closely as possible	3	Meet specifications as closely as possible	3
Meet as many specifications as possible	2	Meet as many specifications as possible	2
Up to the employer to decide	1	Up to the employer to decide	1
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

Monitoring, assessment and evaluation

31. **How is a student's performance in the workplace recorded?** *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Supervisor fills in a checklist of activities student has to complete	1	Supervisor fills in a checklist of activities student has to complete	1
Supervisor writes a report on what student has done	2	Supervisor writes a report on what student has done	2
Student keeps a logbook of their activities	3	Student keeps a logbook of their activities	3
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

32. **Who assesses student performance in the workplace?** *(please circle as many as apply for each placement)*

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
Workplace supervisor	1	Workplace supervisor	1
Teacher from school	2	Teacher from school	2
Teacher from TAFE college	3	Teacher from TAFE college	3
Combination of above	4	Combination of above	4
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

33. **Where is the student assessed?**

Work experience *(please circle one only)*		**Vocational placement** *(please circle one only)*	
In the workplace	1	In the workplace	1
At school	2	At school	2
Both	3	Both	3
Other *(please specify)* ____________		Other *(please specify)* ____________	

34. How many times are students visited during their work experience/placement?
(please specify number of visits for each placement)

Work experience ______________________ **Vocational placement** ______________________

Benefits

35. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that work experience should result in the following outcomes for students? *(please circle only one number for each statement)*

Work experience in the organisation:	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral/ Not sure**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Helps them find out if it is the type of job they really want	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what subjects they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what course they should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what apprenticeship/ traineeship they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to find out what types of skills they will need for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Provides them with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them a better understanding of their employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them more confidence in their ability	1	2	3	4	5
Makes them better informed about what career choices are available	1	2	3	4	5

36. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that vocational placement should result in the following outcomes for students? *(please circle only one number for each statement)*

Vocational placement in the organisation:	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral/ Not sure**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Helps them find out if it is the type of job they really want	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what subjects they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what course they should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what apprenticeship/ traineeship they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5

Q36. Continued

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Gives them an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to find out what types of skills they will need for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Provides them with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them a better understanding of their employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them more confidence in their ability	1	2	3	4	5
Makes them better informed about what career choices are available	1	2	3	4	5

37. In terms of perceived benefits for students, how worthwhile is the work experience/vocational placement?

Work experience *(please circle only one)*		**Vocational placement** *(please circle only one)*	
Extremely worthwhile	5	Extremely worthwhile	5
Worthwhile	4	Worthwhile	4
Not sure/neutral	3	Not sure/neutral	3
Not worthwhile	2	Not worthwhile	2
Not at all worthwhile	1	Not at all worthwhile	1

38. Please explain why you believe the experience/placement is or is not worthwhile.

Work experience

Vocational placement

39. What processes are in place for program evaluation?

Work experience

Vocational placement

40. How could the programs be improved? *(please circle as many as apply for each program)*

Work experience		**Vocational placement**	
More preparation of workplace supervisor	1	More preparation of workplace supervisor	1
Students could be better prepared	2	Students could be better prepared	2
Students could be given more meaningful things to do at work	3	Students could be given more meaningful things to do at work	3
Students could get more visits from workplace coordinator/s	4	Students could get more visits from workplace coordinators	4
There could be more/better coordination between school and the workplace	5	There could be more/better coordination between school and the workplace	5
Other *(please specify)* ______________		Other *(please specify)* ______________	

41. Please provide any general comments regarding any aspects of your school's work experience or vocational placement programs.

Work experience

Vocational placement

42. As part of our study we will be conducting case studies of exemplary work experience/placement programs. If you feel that one of your programs is worthy of further investigation please write down contact details of employers involved in the program(s).

Name of organisation ....

Contact details ....

This questionnaire is, of course, confidential. However, if you are interested in assisting us with further input we would appreciate it if you could provide us with the following contact details.

Your name .... **Contact number** ....

Name and address of your school

....

....

Position held ....

Thank you for your co-operation!

Please return the completed form in the reply paid envelope provided.

Appendix C: Vocational program co-ordinator questionnaire

Vocational program co-ordinator questionnaire

Program description and organisation

1. **Please write down the name of the program you coordinate.** ____________________

2. **How many schools are involved in the program you personally coordinate?**

1-5 schools	1
6-9 schools	2
10-14 schools	3
15+ schools	4

3. **Please indicate how time is scheduled for each of the schools participating in the program for which you are responsible** *(eg. 1 week block per year etc).*

School 1: ____________________

School 2: ____________________

School 3: ____________________

School 4: ____________________

School 5: ____________________

School 6: ____________________

School 7: ____________________

School 8: ____________________

School 9: ____________________

School 10: ____________________

School 11: ____________________

School 12: ____________________

4. **How are school timetables made sufficiently flexible to enable students to participate in vocational placements without missing out on any new classes?** *(please specify)*

Selection and coordination

5. **Who decides in which organisation the student will do a vocational placement?**

Student	1
Workplace coordinator	2
Workplace supervisor	3

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

6. **What criteria must students satisfy before being selected for a vocational program?**

7. **What criteria must employers satisfy before being selected to have students in their workplace?**

8. **Briefly describe the student's role in getting the vocational placement organised.**

9. **Briefly describe your role in organising the vocational placement.**

10. **Briefly describe the employer's role in organising the vocational placement.**

11. **What problems, if any, have you experienced in finding appropriate workplace sites for students?**

12. **How do you liaise with workplace supervisors?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

Meeting(s) before placement	1
Regular meetings during placement	2
Telephone conversations when necessary	3
Written feedback from supervisor via student during placement	4
Don't liaise	*5*

Other *(please specify)* ____________

13. **What follow-up activities are provided following the vocational placement?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

Students:

Informally discuss skills learnt at work	1
Write a report on their experiences	2
Give oral presentations of their experience	3
No follow-up required	*4*

Other *(please specify)* ____________

Assistance and preparation

14. **What assistance does the employer/workplace supervisor receive for providing vocational placement?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

Financial assistance 1
Assistance in assessment practices 2
Assessment/recording materials 3
No assistance provided 4
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

15. **Do employers contribute financially to the program?**

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q16)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q17)*

16. **If yes, please list the programs to which employers contribute and approximately how much they contribute per student for each program?**

Name of program	Contributions	Name of program	Contributions
____________	$ ______	____________	$ ______
____________	$ ______	____________	$ ______
____________	$ ______	____________	$ ______
____________	$ ______	____________	$ ______

17. **What assistance do you as the vocational program coordinator receive?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

Funding 1
Industry assistance *(ITABs, VETAB, DETEC)* 2
Assistance from other school staff 3
Training 4
No assistance provided 5
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

18. **What assistance would you require to make your program more effective?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

Additional funding 1
Additional staff 2
Training 3
No additional assistance required 4
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

19. **What training have you received for carrying out this role?** *(please circle as many as apply)*

I was given training in how to:

Liaise with employers .... 1 *(Go to Q20)*
Obtain vocational placements .... 2 *(Go to Q20)*
Market the program .... 3 *(Go to Q20)*
Monitor the quality of the vocational placement .... 4 *(Go to Q20)*
No training provided .... 5 *(Go to Q21)*
Other *(please specify)* ____________________

20. **How successful was this training?**

Very successful 5
Successful 4
Not sure/neutral 3
Not successful 2
Not at all successful 1

21. **Do students receive any training before going out to the workplace?**

Yes 1
No 2

If yes, what does it include?

22. **Do workplace supervisors receive any training prior to having students on vocational placements?**

Yes 1
No 2

If yes, what does it include?

23. **What type of advice are employers/supervisors provided with regarding the purpose and structure of the program?** *(please specify)*

24. **Are students expected to prepare for their vocational placement?**

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q25)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q26)*

25. **If yes, what are students advised to do?**
(please circle as many as apply)

Contact workplace supervisor 1
Find out about the organisation 2
Discuss employer expectations 3
Discuss program/course requirements 4
Discuss expected outcomes 5
Complete vocational placement forms 6
Other *(please specify)*

26. Do students go into the workplace with a specific list of skills they are expected to develop?

Yes	1 *(Go to Q27)*
No	2 *(Go to Q28)*

27. Who specifies the skills students are expected to develop?

Program coordinator	1
Employer/supervisor	2
Teacher	3
Determined by the curriculum	4
Don't know	5

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

28. How are workplace supervisors expected to assist students in developing their skills?

____

____

____

____

29. What are the consequences of students choosing not to participate in compulsory vocational placement?

Students don't/can't:

Acquire competency	1
Gain module	2
Complete course	3
Graduate	4
Take up leadership positions	5
No consequences	6

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

Monitoring, assessment and evaluation

30. How is a student's performance in the workplace recorded? *(please circle as many as apply)*

Accredited workplace assessor checks off logbook	1
Supervisor fills in a checklist of activities student has to complete	2
Supervisor writes a report on what student has done	3
Student keeps a journal of their activities	4
Not recorded	5

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

31. Who assesses student performance in the workplace? *(please circle as many as apply)*

Workplace supervisor	1
Teacher from school	2
Teacher from TAFE college	3
Coordinator	4

Other *(please specify)* ____________________

32. Where is the student assessed?

In the workplace/on-the-job 1
At school/off-the-job 2
Both 3
Other *(please specify)* ____________

Benefits

33. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that vocational placement should result in the following outcomes for students? *(please circle only one number for each statement)*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Work experience in the organisation:					
Helps them find out if it is the type of job they really want	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what subjects they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what course they should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them decide what apprenticeship/ traineeship they should do in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to find out what types of skills they will need for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Provides them with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them a better understanding of their employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them more confidence in their ability	1	2	3	4	5
Makes them better informed about what career choices are available	1	2	3	4	5

34. In terms of perceived benefits for students, how valuable is a vocational placement?

Extremely valuable 5
Very valuable 4
Valuable 3
Not sure/neutral 2
Only limited value 1

35. How many students from the programs you coordinate have been offered the following as a result of their involvement in a vocational placement? **No. of students**

Full-time employment ________
Part-time employment ________
An apprenticeship ________
A traineeship ________
More work experience ________
Other *(please specify)* ____________

36. **How many students have decided to continue schooling to upgrade their qualifications as a result of doing a vocational placement?**

No. of students ____________________

37. **Do you have any processes in place for program evaluation?**

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q38)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q39)*

38. **If yes, what processes are in place for program evaluation?**

____
____
____
____
____

39. **If no, are you planning to have any in place in the future?**

Yes 1
No 2
Don't know 3

40. **Please provide any general comments regarding any aspects of your vocational placement program.**

____
____
____
____
____

As part of our study we will be conducting case studies of exemplary work experience/vocational placement programs. If you feel that one of your programs is worthy of further investigation please write down contact details of employers involved in the program(s).

Name of organisation ....

Contact details ....

This questionnaire is, of course, confidential. However, if you are interested in assisting us with further input we would appreciate it if you could provide us with the following contact details.

Your name .... **Contact number** ....

Mailing address

....
....

Position held ....

Thank you for your co-operation!

Please return the completed form in the reply paid envelope provided.

Appendix D: Workplace supervisor questionnaire

Workplace supervisor questionnaire

Work experience and vocational placement arrangements for Years 10, 11 and 12 students

Name........................ **Organisation**......................

1. **Has your organisation been involved with any of the following programs this year?**

	Yes	No
General work experience	1	2
Vocational placement	1	2

→ Name of program/course type *(eg.TRAC/E Team)*

____

Other *(please specify)*____________________

2. **If no, what is the major reason for not providing work experience/placements?**

(Tick as many as apply)

Have not been approached.................. 1
Work site too dangerous for students.. 2
Not enough work to provide students with valuable experiences 3
Not enough staff to supervise students.. 4
Don't like having students in the workplace...................................... 5
Prior experience with students................ 6
Other *(please specify)*____________________

3. **What would encourage you to provide work placements/experience for students in the future?**

(Tick as many as apply)

Would provide it if I were approached . 1
Up turn in business 2
Improved attitude of students 3
If we could provide students with more meaningful tasks 4
More staff available to supervise 5
Nothing 6
Other *(please specify)*____________________

4. **If you have provided work placements/experience, how many students have you had in your workplace in the last year?** *(please specify numbers of each type)*

General work experience __________ Structured vocational placements __________

5. **How was the placement organised?**

1-2 week block per year........................ 1
1 day a week throughout semester/year..................... 2
1-2 week block per semester 3
Other *(please specify)*____________________

6. **What specific information did you require, from the school before you agreed to accept a student into your workplace?** *(please specify)*

7. **Did workplace supervisors or any other employees in your organisation receive any training before supervising students in the workplace?**

Yes	1 *(Go to Q7)*
No	2 *(Go to Q8)*

8. **If yes, describe the type of training they received**

9. **What kind of training do you think is necessary for workplace supervisors or employees to receive before they work with or supervise school students?** *(please specify)*

10. **What specific tasks did you expect students on structured work placements to do?** *(eg. handle mail, file records, use the fax machine, answer the phone, peel vegetables, set tables, type a letter etc.) (please specify)*

11. **What specific tasks did you expect students on work experience to do?** *(eg. observe and take notes, help out with some general tasks, photocopy materials, tidy up work areas etc.) (please specify)*

12. Who supervised the student during the work placement/experience?

(Tick as many as apply)

Supervisor	1
Manager	2
Leading hand	3
Other workers	4

Other *(please specify)* ______________

13. How willing were you or other employees to supervise or work with students in the workplace?

Extremely willing	5
Willing	4
Not sure/neutral	3
Not very willing	2
Not willing at all	1

14. From your experience please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that work experience/placement allows students to achieve the following benefits? *(please circle only one number for each statement)*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Working in a company:					
Helps them to find out if it is the type of job they really want	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what subjects to do in their next year	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what course they should do at university/TAFE	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them to decide what apprenticeship/traineeship they should do	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the number of different jobs available	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them an understanding of the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
Helps them find out what sort of skills are needed for particular jobs	1	2	3	4	5
Provides them with the opportunity to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them the opportunity to experience responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them a better understanding of their employment potential	1	2	3	4	5
Gives them more confidence in their ability	1	2	3	4	5
Informs them on available career choices	1	2	3	4	5

15. **What are the most important types of attributes you feel students should demonstrate during their work placement/experience?** *(please specify)*

16. **From your experience, to what extent do students possess these kinds of attributes?**

All students display these attributes 4
Most students display these attributes . 3
Few students display these attributes .. 2
None of the students have displayed these attributes so far 1
Other (please specify) ______________

17. **What do you think are the benefits for your company in providing work placements/ experience to school students?** *(please specify)*

18. **What are the problems, if any, associated with having school students in the workplace?** *(eg. Occupational health and safety, discipline etc.)*

19. **Were you or any other employees expected to fill out a logbook during the student's placement/ experience?**

Yes .... 1 *(Go to Q19)*
No .... 2 *(Go to Q20)*

20. **If yes, how adequate was this method for recording workplace activities?**

Very adequate 5
Adequate 4
Not sure 3
Inadequate 2
Extremely inadequate 1

21. **How was the student's performance assessed?**

Supervisor/manager checked off student completed competencies...... 1

Supervisor wrote a short evaluation report on the student............................ 2

Teacher assessed the student on-the-job... 3

Other (please specify)____________________

22. **What, if anything, do you think could be done to improve the method by which student activities in the workplace are assessed, recorded and reported on?** *(please specify)*

____

____

____

____

23. **In your opinion, what value is there in providing placements which involve only observation and experience?** *(please specify)*

____

____

____

____

24. **How would you prefer to organise the time students spend in the workplace?** *(Tick one box for each type of program only)*

General work experience		**Structured learning placements**	
1-4 days per year only	☐	1 day per week for a specified amount of time	☐
1 week block per year	☐	1 week block per semester	☐
2 week block per year	☐	2 week blocks per semester	☐
Other *(please specify)*________		Other *(please specify)*________	

25. **Please indicate the number of students who have been offered the following options as a result of doing work experience/placement with your company?**

	No. of students
Full-time employment	______
Part-time employment	______
Casual employment	______
An apprenticeship	______
A traineeship	______
Further work experience	______
Other *(please specify)*	______

26. **Did your organisation receive any assistance for taking part in their work experience/placement programs?**

Yes.. 1

No.. 2

27. What sort of assistance was received?

(Tick as many as apply)

Training in what was expected 1
Induction programs 2
Resources *(eg. learning materials, assessment tools, log books)* 3
Financial assistance 4
Advice from teachers 5
Other *(please specify)* ______________________

28. What other assistance would your organisation have liked to receive?

____

____

____

____

29. How was the work experience/placement coordinated between the school and your organisation?

____

____

____

____

____

30. Have the schools who have sent students to your organisation given you information prior to the placement on:

	No	Not sure	Yes
a) the purpose of work placements/ experience?	1	2	3
b) the structure of work placements/ experience?	1	2	3
c) you role and responsibility in providing work placements/experience?	1	2	3

31. In your opinion, what constitutes a good work placement/experience?

____

____

____

____

____

32. **What in your opinion, is the value of workplace programs which involve students learning specific skills which are assessed on-the-job?**

33. **What in your opinion is the value of workplace programs which allow students to count the experience towards a credential?**

34. **Any other comments?**

Appendix E: Employer contributions to cost of program (co-ordinator survey)

Table 105 presents the programs to which employers contribute and the dollar amounts of contributions made.

Table 105: Employer contributions to vocational placement programs

Program	Contributions
TRAC	
T Foods	75.00 per annum
T Retail	125.00 per placement
TRAC Auto	100.00 per term
TRAC Auto	125.00 per placement
TRAC Hospitality	100.00 per term
TRAC Office CEC	100.00 per term
TRAC Mt Gambier	280.00 per annum
KI TRAC	100.00
TRAC Retail Hosp	Not provided
TRAC	130.00 per placement
TRAC	100.00 per term
TRAC West	90.00 X 4 terms
TRAC Retail	120.00 per placement
TRAC Autgo	120.00 per placement
TRAC Office	120.00 per placement
TRAC Narrandera	50.00 per placement
TRAC Cooper Pedy	75.00 per student per term
TRAC	95.50 per placement
Other programs:	
Auto motive	75.00 per annum
Tourism	75.00 per annum
Business management training	7,500.00 per student per annum
Office skills	75.00 per annum
Central Coast Stage 2	100.00
Alcoa Bus. Mgt. Traineeship	125.00 per placement
Hospitality	80.00 per placement
Griffith Stage 2	100.00
Mitsubishi/DECS	0.5 of co-ordinator's salary
EMFTC Pt Adel	200.00
Alcoa Traineeship	7,500 per student per annum
Retail	20.00 per placement
Central Coast Stage 1	180.00
Work placement	25.00 per week
TRAC supervisor training	25.00

Appendix F: Consequences for students not attending vocational placements (co-ordinator survey)

Other consequences identified by co-ordinators included students:

- not receiving full certificate (n=2)
- not receiving credit for the course (n=1)
- not receiving a statement of attainment (n=1)
- missing out on experience and opportunity to develop competency (n=3)
- missing out on opportunity to include experience on résumé (n=1)
- being removed from program (n=3)

At least two co-ordinators reported that vocational placements for students in vocational programs were mandatory. Therefore, students had no opportunities to refuse to do these placements.

Appendix F1: Information required by supervisors before agreeing to accept students

Other information required by supervisors before agreeing to accept students included:

- contracts between the organisation and the student
- work experience agreement forms
- family background and student learning difficulties
- language proficiency
- specific clothing requirements
- school work experience agreement form
- specific area of interest of student
- letter from school
- dates for work experience
- details on future courses to be undertaken
- written reports on academic performance
- information on students' interest in working in the industry
- student medical problems which may preclude them from working in the organisation
- student experience in area of interest
- contact telephone numbers

Appendix G: Preparation for work experience/ vocational placements (co-ordinator survey)

Other activities required of students to prepare for placements included:

- completion of work experience placement (n=1)
- completion of work ethic contract (n=1)
- attendance of orientation meetings or interview (n=3)
- familiarisation with logbook or skills booklet requirements (n=6)
- planning what they hope to achieve on their first day at the workplace (n=1)
- basic training (n=1)
- skills assessment test (n=1)
- familiarisation with overview of the course (n=1)
- development of job seeking skills (n=1)
- development of report writing skills (n=1)
- development of communication and questioning skills (n=2)
- development of questions for obtaining feedback from supervisors (n=1)

Appendix H: Assistance provided to workplace supervisors (co-ordinator survey)

Co-ordinators also indicated that the assistance provided to workplace surpervisors included:

- making available supervisor training program (n=13)
- provision of employer guides and other materials (n=4)
- assistance in how to structure learning (n=2)
- provision of feedback materials (n=1)

Appendix I: Assistance for vocational placement co-ordinators (co-ordinator survey)

Other forms of assistance reported by co-ordinators included:

- time release from regular classroom work (n=4)
- extra preparation time (n=2), funding from employer or ASTF (n=6)
- ability to attend network meetings (n=2)
- support from management committees (n=2)
- support from local TAFE (n=2)
- facilities from moving the program (n=1)
- support from government department of education (n=1)
- Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) common affliction (n=1)
- ASTF newsletter (n=1) and school assistance (n=1)

Appendix J: Training received by students prior to starting work experience/ vocational placements

Other forms of training received by students included:

- information sessions (n=5)
- process and presentation skills (n=4)
- customer service skills (n=8)

Appendix K: Training received by co-ordinators (co-ordinators'survey)

Other training reported by co-ordinators included:

- attendances at workshops and conferences (n=8)
- workplace assessor training (n=5)
- ASTF booklets, videos (n=3)
- hands-on experience (n=3)
- training experience
- workplace supervisor training (n=3)
- assistance from other co-ordinators and vocational education staff (n=6)

Appendix L: Co-ordinator requests for further assistance (co-ordinator survey)

Other forms of assistance requested by co-ordinators included:

- extra funding to cover liaison and administration costs (n=2)
- equipment (n=1)
- workplace supervisor and assessor training (n=2)
- motor vehicles (n=2)
- co-ordinator network (n=1)
- flexible timetable arrangements (n=1)
- permanent office (n=1)
- own phone line (n=1)
- extra staff to help arrange placement once recruitment in place (n=1)
- resource material (n=1)
- transport allowance (n=2)
- placements available in larger centres (n=1)
- assistance with assessment (n=1)
- more employer incentives (reduction of costs) (n=2)
- more government involvement (n=1)
- funding on a yearly basis (n=1)

Appendix M: Information required by supervisors (supervisor survey)

Other information requested by supervisors included:

- student's reason for choosing the career (n=1)
- what experience is sought by the student (n=1)
- references (n=1)
- career interests of student (n=1)
- aspirations of student (n=1)
- student background (interests, certificates, experience) (n=1)
- employer/employee relationship (n=1)
- equal employment opportunity (n=1)
- a five-minute chat (n=1)
- as much information as possible (n=1)

Appendix N: Forms of assistance requested by supervisors (supervisor survey)

Other forms of assistance required by supervisors included:

- involving the school supervisor in the development of the program (n=1)
- financial assistance to include 'shadowing' components into the placement program (n=1)
- extra staff (n=2)
- general instructions on office conduct (n=1)
- self-confidence (n=1)
- industry-specific training (n=1)
- career options within industry courses (n=1)
- more work (n=1)
- better selection of students (n=1)
- financial assistance to help deal with students with physical disabilities (n=1)
- financial assistance to cover administrative costs (n=1)
- industry-specific training for teachers (n=1)

Appendix O: Modes used for allocating time spent in the workplace

Other major mode variations included:

- three days straight (n=8)
- four-day block (n=8)
- two one-week blocks (n=8)

Appendix P: Reasons for changing mode for work experience/vocational placements (student survey)

Other reasons for changing the mode for work experience/vocational placements included:

- separate days don't help students develop good relations with other workers (n=1)
- time should be reduced as there was not a lot to do (n=5)
- time should be reduced when the student does not like the workplace (n=1)
- catching up on school work can be an added burden (n=2)
- the variety of jobs to be done during the placement should be increased (n=1)
- work experience should be extended to two weeks (n=3)
- blocks of time are preferable to allow for continuity (n=7)
- out-of-school hours should be used (n=2)
- work experience was too long, mundane and boring (n=4)
- work experience was too short (n=5)
- variety and length of time should be increased (n=2)
- blocks of time should be broken up so that some is undertaken at beginning of the year and some at the end; work experience should be spread out over a number of weeks (n=3)

Three students could not decide why it was an inappropriate mode.

Appendix Q: Modes for work experience/ vocational placements (teacher survey)

Other modes for arranging work experience reported by teachers included:

- one day per fortnight throughout the term
- maximum of two weeks either in two-week blocks or one-week blocks
- continuous, flexible arrangements
- according to individual needs
- mixture of one and two weeks
- half-day a week throughout the term, some full days and one-week block

Appendix R: Specification of skills to be learnt in workplace (co-ordinator survey)

Co-ordinators also reported that skills were also specified in the following ways:

- consultations between employers and teachers (n=2)
- decisions by management committee (n=3)
- decisions by ITABs (n=1)
- according to the particular program the student is involved in (n=4)
- specified in logbooks (n=4)
- specified by industry standards (n=2)
- specified by students themselves (n=1)
- specified by ASTF requirements (n=1)
- decisions resulting from negotiations between participants (n=2)

Appendix S: Assessment of students (student survey)

The following activities were also described as means by which students were assessed.

- teacher and supervisor discussing student's progress (n=4)
- teacher visiting the workplace to check up on students (n=6)
- student receiving a reference and written comments (n=1)
- student completing a work experience booklet (n=5)
- student completing an assignment (n=4)
- supervisor providing a rating on skills acquired by student (n=6)
- student keeping a journal of activities (n=5)
- Other workers providing comment and assessment (n=2)
- student time card (n=2)
- supervisor writing a letter (n=1)
- students completing a questionnaire (n=6)
- teacher completing a checklist (n=1)
- supervisor observing student at work (n=2)
- supervisor talking to student (n=2)

A small percentage (2.3%) of students also reported that supervisors completed a report form which was sent to them by the school.

Appendix T: Recording student performance (co-ordinator survey)

Other activities for recording student performance included:

- use of feedback sheets, checklists and evaluation forms (n=4)
- the checking of logbooks by workplace assessor (n=1)
- the signing off of student journals by supervisors (n=2)
- the checking of attendance records by co-ordinator (n=1)
- the checking of performance by co-ordinator (n=1)
- the completion of assessment by supervisor (n=3)
- the writing of report on experiences by student (n=1)
- the completion of assessment records (n=2)
- the assessment of records by the trainee (n=2)

Appendix U: Liaison between schools and workplaces (co-ordinator survey)

Other activities for liaison between schools and workplaces included:

- regular visits to the workplace or establishment (n=5)
- an end of placement visit or meeting (n=4)
- advisory committee meetings, reviewing assessment materials (n=7)
- written evaluations and feedback during or after placements and telephone contact (n=7)
- assisting with skills assessment, supervisor information evenings (n=2)

Appendix V: Follow-up activities (student survey)

Other follow-up activities included:

- keeping a diary or journal (n=21)
- attending interviews (n=2)
- having discussions with teachers (n=12)
- writing thank-you letters (n=28)
- completing evaluation sheets (n=3)
- going on a camp (n=5)

Appendix W: Follow-up activities identified by co-ordinators

Other follow-up activities included:

- keeping a journal of record of experiences (n=3)
- completing record books and evaluations (n=6)
- keeping in contact with employer if they were interested in the career
- completing projects, assignments and worksheets (n=4)
- completing logbook requirements (n=8)
- completing assessment procedures (n=2)
- writing articles for school newsletter (n=2)
- discussing their experiences (n=1)
- attending interviews with co-ordinators (n=1)
- performing activities based on placement experiences (n=1)
- writing letters to employers (n=2)
- attending orientation meetings (n=1)
- checking and reviewing logbooks (n=6)
- discussing employer appraisals (n=4)

Appendix X: Evaluating programs for vocational placements (co-ordinator survey)

Co-ordinators reported that they also evaluated programs using:

- an evaluation kit (n=1)
- an external evaluator (n=1)
- an audit process (n=1)
- student self-assessment (n=1)
- the popularity of subjects as an indicator of performance (n=1)
- regularly visiting students in placements (n=3)

Appendix Y: Non-numerical indications of offers made to students (supervisor survey)

Table 106: Non-numerical indications of offers made to students

Offer	References	Work experience	Permanent part-time	Permanent casual	Full-time	Apprentice-ships	Trainee-ships
Tick (✔)	8	3	2	3	0	1	0
On request	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
All	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Most	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Some or several	4	0	0	1	3	0	0
Many or lots	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
Few	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Total number of companies	25	7	2	4	5	1	0

Appendix Z: Perceived company benefits derived from participation in work experience/vocational placement programs (supervisor survey)

Other company benefits identified by supervisors included:

- students' improved interest and morale in the workplace (n=4)
- the experience gave students general exposure to work life (n=5)
- having students in the workplace allowed other people to interact with young people (n=2)
- working with students provided staff development opportunities (n=2)
- allowed company to improve records of potential recruits (n=2)
- provided feedback for company (n=1)
- allowed company to practise corporate citizenship (n=1)

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